

SEROGGINS

ornia
al
y



JOHN URILLOYD



LIBRARY

**UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA
SAN DIEGO**

✓
PS

3523

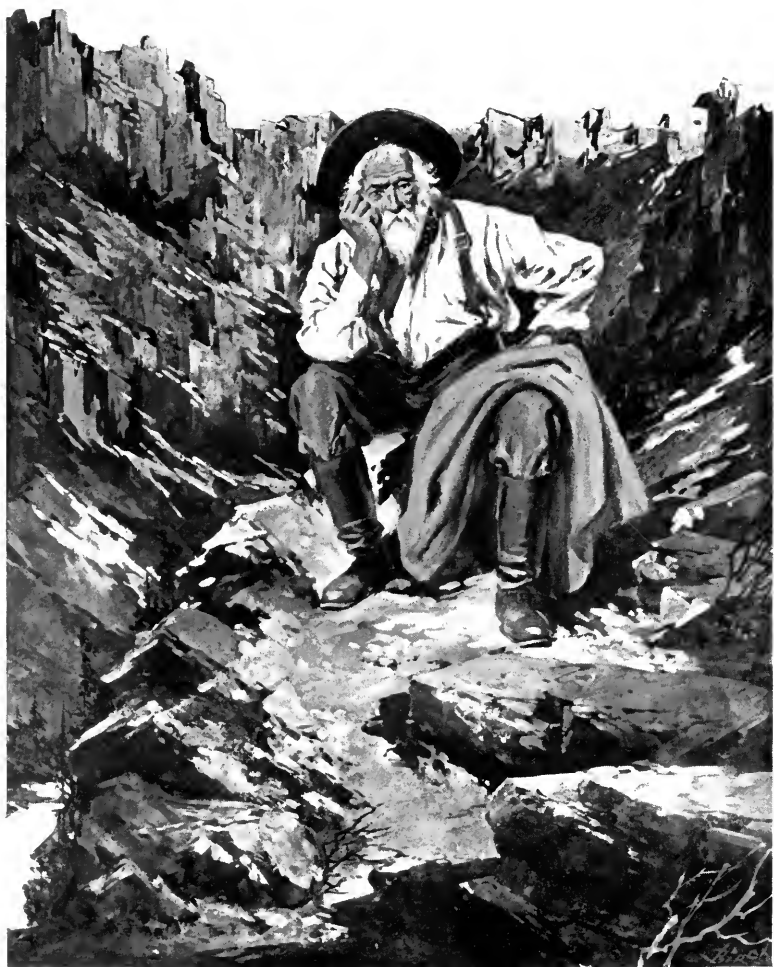
L64

S3

XX



SCROGGINS



SCROGGINS

SCROGGINS

BY

JOHN URI LLOYD

AUTHOR OF "STRINGTOWN ON
THE PIKE," "RED HEAD," ETC.



*ILLUSTRATIONS AND
DECORATIONS BY*

REGINALD B. BIRCH

DODD, MEAD & COMPANY
NEW YORK : : : : : MCMIV

Copyright, 1900, 1904,
BY DODD, MEAD & COMPANY

Published, November

To the

CINCINNATI LITERARY CLUB

*Before whom the author read this
sketch, from the manuscript **

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	THE JOURNEY OF SCROGGINS	1
II	THE OLD HOME OF SCROGGINS	16
III	THE GRAVEYARD OF OLD	22
IV	BROTHER AND SISTER	28
V	"I HAVEN'T ANYTHING ELSE BUT SISTER"	33
VI	THE BEQUEST	38
VII	CHILD-LOVE	55
VIII	LUCY MOORE	74
IX	A SECOND REQUEST --- "WHEN THE OLD MAN'S WORK IS DONE"	109

ILLUSTRATIONS

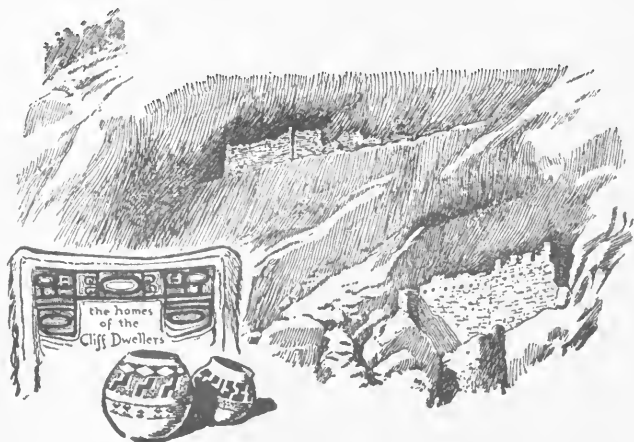
SCROGGINS	FRONTISPIECE
“ ‘SPEAK TER ME, SISTER; SPEAK TER ME’ ”	Facing page 36
“ AND GREW TO ENVY THE FLICKER OF THE CANDLE-LIGHT THAT BATHED HER FACE ”	“ “ 62
“ HE STRODE AWAY, TURNED BACK. ‘ PLEASE, MA’AM, JIM DIDN’T STEAL THAT MUSIC BOX ’ ” . .	“ “ 106

SCROGGINS

CHAPTER I

THE JOURNEY OF SCROGGINS

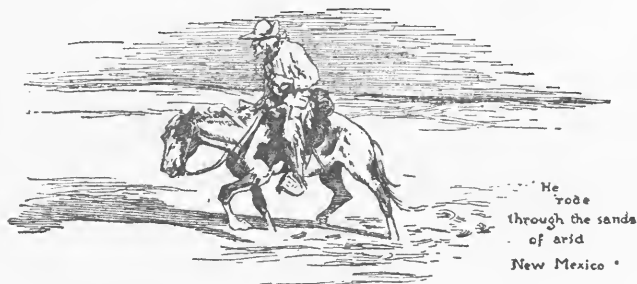
SCROGGINS, an eccentric old Rocky Mountain stage driver, made a lucky investment in the stock of a Western mining claim, and became, unexpectedly, very wealthy. He at



S C R O G G I N S

once gave up the vocation he had followed for twenty years, and prepared to "take it easy." With this object in view, he first made a tour of the Colorado cañons, but found little of interest in the fantastic natural castles, with their striated bluffs and coloured walls, that challenge imagination and belittle man.

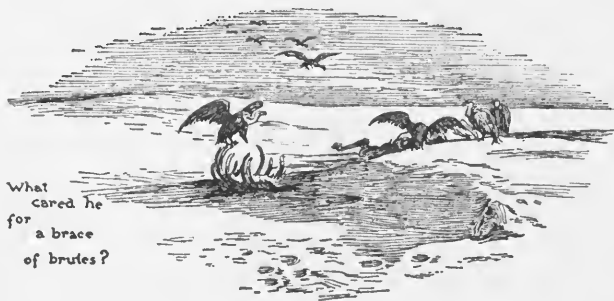
Then he wandered among the homes of the Cliff Dwellers, but the relics of that lost people brought to him no pathetic touch concerning the human lives that had left their only story in these forsaken domiciles. The spirit-cry that penetrates the minds of cultured men who stand on the hallowed places of a race vanished from earth was unheard. The fragmentary



T H E J O U R N E Y

ruins were but groups of hovels, in stone, to him.

Scroggins next turned his face toward the South. He rode through the sands of arid New Mexico, wearing the life out of one mustang, and then another. What cared he for a brace of brutes? He tramped the Arkansas bottoms, and in the home of the cypress, gave as little thought to the mystery of the fantastic cypress knees that stud the swamp, like living tombstones, as he did to the rootless gray moss that, funeral like, draped the mighty trees. The famous Everglades of Florida were dismal swamps to him, the bayous of the South were but sluggish creeks, flowing in natural ditches.



What
cared he
for
a brace
of brutes?

S C R O G G I N S

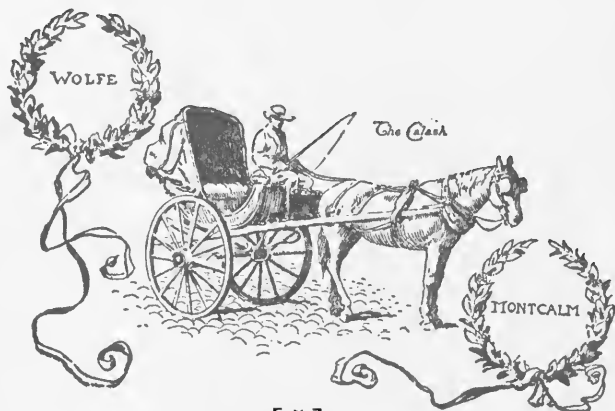
The great piles of shells on the coast of Florida, bivalve-monuments that speak of pre-historic gluttony, adding another paragraph to the long story of man's sacrifice of helpless life, excited less movement in Scroggins' ossified brain than did a single oyster on his dinner-plate. The fact that the Mississippi River flows upon a ridge of earth made up of gravel, sand, and clay, in the depths of which lie great trees and fragments of wood whose lost histories stagger the mind of him who attempts to locate the period in which their growth was made, to Scroggins was a matter of no moment. What concern was it of this



T H E J O U R N E Y

Western stage-driver, whether the male or the female of the sugar-cane had been lost in ages past? What was it to him whether the banana had ever possessed more than the rudiments of seed now shown in the black specks imbedded in the fruit pulp? Nothing. 'Twas for him enough, if sugar and bananas were at hand when he wished them.

Then Scroggins wandered down into the sunny land of the Montezumas, where, more than a century before the Puritan with his Bible and his sword landed on the frozen shores of the North, men following the Cross



S C R O G G I N S

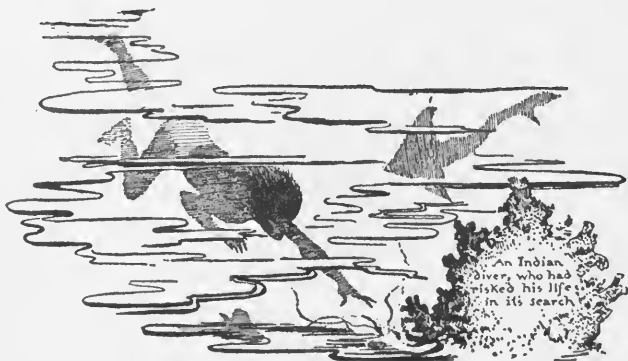
had made history by conquest. But to Scroggins came no heart-thrill in the story of it all. Enough for him that in each case the native, who rightfully owned the land, had disappeared. He crossed the charmed land of the Incas of old, but the Sierra Madres to him were only mountains. The Gulf of Cortez lay at his feet, but it was only water, water that beat stone and sand as does other water. It was no concern of his, if the rightful name of the great leader, Cortez, first applied to that magnificent gulf, had been brushed aside by the maker of maps to be replaced by a foreign word. The story of the pirates of La Paz, the



T H E J O U R N E Y

lives of the monks of San Blas, the ruins of the great Cathedral of Loreto, where five hundred years ago centred the efforts of the missions of all the Californias, to Scroggins were as utterly lost as if they had been but legends.

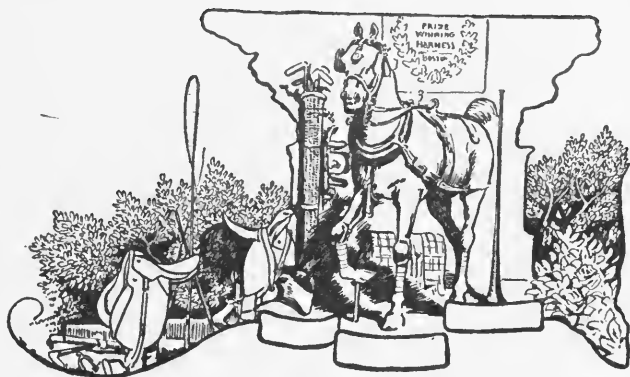
Finally, Scroggins sat awkwardly in a dug-out on the waters of that beautiful bay which had given to the world the queen of all pearls, now in the crown of Spain. But the story of this gem is history, and for Scroggins history had no attraction. An Indian diver, who had risked his life in its search, held before him a magnificent pearl of purest white and richest



S C R O G G I N S

lustre. It, too, had come out of those clear blue waters.

For the first time in his journey, Scroggins' heart throbbed, not because of the beauty of the pearl, not by reason of connected associations, but because of some unaccountable touch it inspired concerning the long ago. His brain was sluggish, his hand callous, his heart tough, and yet the sight of this fair pearl struck a nerve leading to a secret heart-chamber. A tear sprang to the eye of the man, as a phantom child-face rose from out the misty realms of the past, invisible to others, but alive

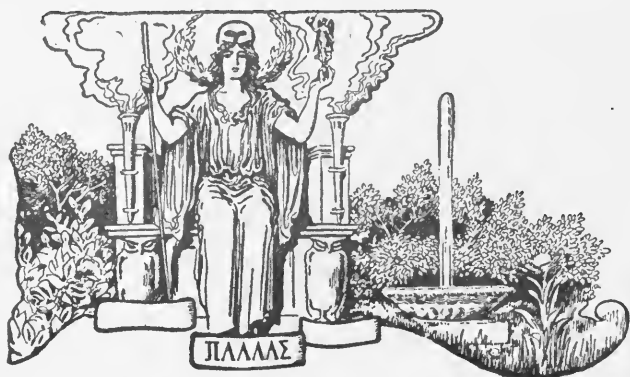


T H E J O U R N E Y

again for him. The gem was sacred that bred the thought.

For a moment only the old man hesitated. No living woman, be she queen or village maiden, should that fair pearl touch. Carefully he took it from out his open palm, and held it tight between thumb and forefinger. Then, before the native diver could comprehend his purpose, back it went into the waters of the great bay, down into the crystal sea that beats the shore of beautiful Loreto.

The diver was paralysed as it vanished. His face spoke his distress. For that pearl,



S C R O G G I N S

the man's life had been risked in the home of the shark.

"How much?" abruptly asked Scroggins.

"Five hundred dollars," was the trembling reply.

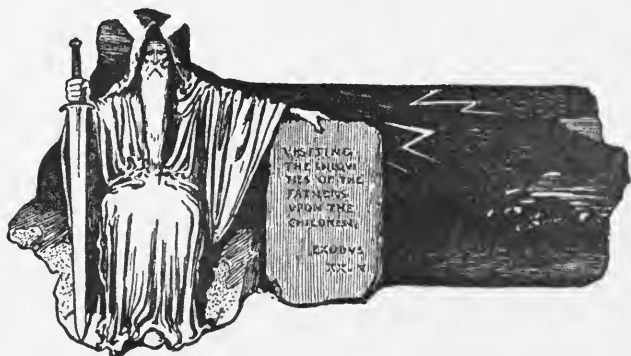
Scroggins counted the gold into the brown hand of the native. Twice the amount would have been as freely given. What is gold to one who would have given a million dollars for a single glance at the sister lost in the years of his boyhood? Could the old man have made a better offering in behalf of the memory of the girl he loved so dearly, than this bit of purity that, in her name, he had so reverently con-



THE JOURNEY

signed to the clear waters of the Bay of Pearls, that beats the gravel shore of fair Loreto?

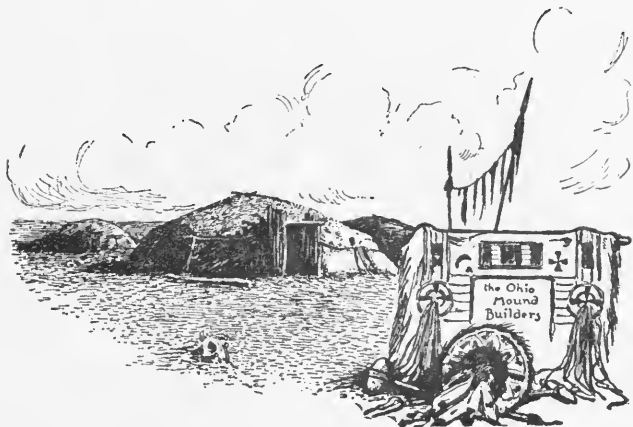
Leaving the land of warmth, Scroggins journeyed to the north, and crossed the plains of the Great West. Gazing, day after day, at the endlessly unrolling panorama, he yet gave no thought to the magnitude of his country, nor to the richness of its people. The waste of plain, with countless buffalo wallows yet lingering in the soil, but now possessed only by groups of nimble prairie-dogs, held no pathos for Scroggins. He had, in unconcern, helped exterminate that mighty beast. The fields of corn, those vast-spread evidences of



S C R O G G I N S

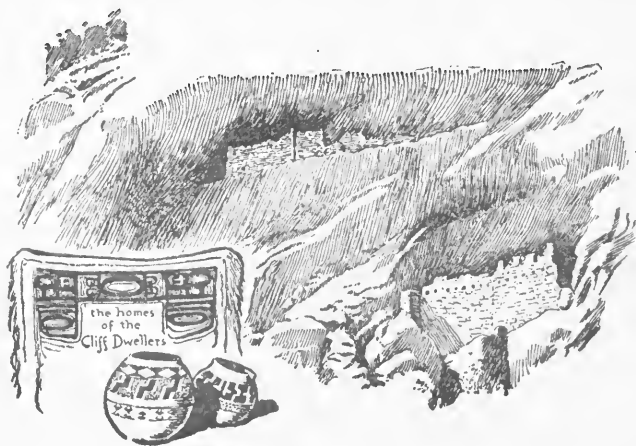
man's industry, that were next unrolled before his eyes, were alike unappreciated. The relics of the Ohio Mound Builders would have been unnoticed by him had they not been pointed out by a car acquaintance. They suggested nothing but mud-piles, and to Scroggins very small ones.

Thence he fled to the land of snow, to that part of America where the tongue is French, the land "New France," and yet over which the flag of England floats. But here he drew no inspiration from the endless legends that



T H E J O U R N E Y

spoke of lust and sin, of unsullied love and religious fervency, nor yet from the precious relics that told of war and suffering, crimes and horrors, martyrdom in behalf of the Church, and savage man's sacrifices for home and country. Yet he gaped in amazement at the two-wheeled calash of Quebec in which he sat, much as a mouse might sit in a broken pumpkin shell. That vehicle was within his circumscribed comprehension, and as he jolted over the "Heights of Abraham," or stood amid the ruins of Château Bigot, he thought less of



S C R O G G I N S

all these than of the clumsy cart, and its driver curiously perched before him on the dashboard.

Then he sought Boston, where he passed with indifference the art museums and libraries, to stand entranced before the window of a harness shop. For the treasures displayed therein he would have given all the statues of antiquity, all the paintings in the art halls of Christendom.

Scroggins had now travelled the country over, searching for his "easy place," and yet his journeyings had but served to illuminate more conspicuously the fact that if we do not



T H E J O U R N E Y

make for ourselves an "easy place" as we go, none is to be found lurking in infirmity's path at the journey's end. With an unlimited bank account, this old man was homeless. Homelessness is the mother of discontent, and discontent is the enemy of happiness.



"The boy
threw
himself
beside
the
bed"

CHAPTER II

THE OLD HOME OF SCROGGINS

FINALLY, in utter weariness of spirit, Scroggins turned his steps toward the place of his birth, where, long since, he had knelt beside the open grave of the only relative he had ever known, the young sister whose phantom face had sprung to view that day in the



T H E O L D H O M E

canoe on the waters of the distant Gulf. "I'll go back ag'in and see the old spot," said Scroggins, as he pictured anew the scenes of his childhood. But here all was strange. His native village had grown to the size of a small city. The creek, that was crystal clear when he knew it as a boy, now ran through a tunnel under the new town. The clear waters of that old brook where he once caught speckled trout were now soiled with sewage.

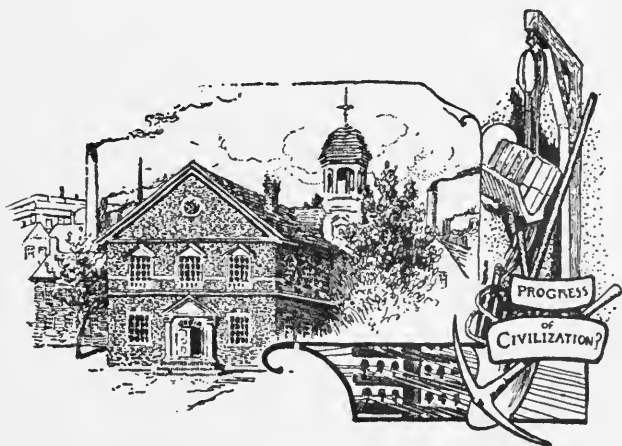
The modest homes, and their picturesque surroundings, had been devoured by that desecrating cannibal, misnamed "Progress of



S C R O G G I N S

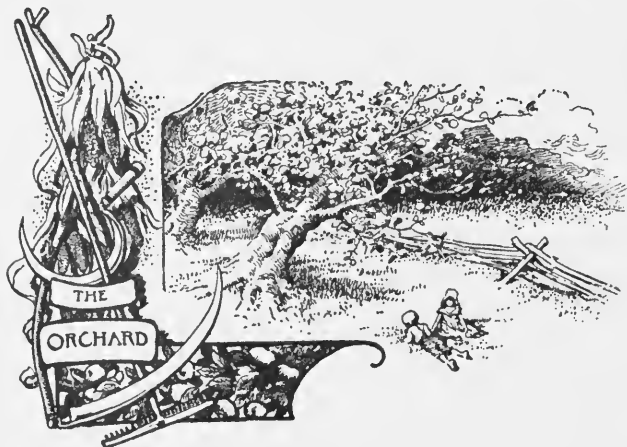
Civilisation." The orchard on the hillside, where the robins and thrushes once nested, had been destroyed to make room for a poorly ventilated stone court-house and a window-grated jail. The very hills had been shaved down and the valleys filled. Seemingly, no landmarks remained to tell the heart-heavy man of localities that had been precious in former times.

Scroggins wandered back and forth with lengthened face, lost in the home of his birth-place; a stranger in a land of strangeness. At



THE OLD HOME

last, he stood disconsolate on the pavement in the centre of the new city; a city that seemed the creation of a dream. More than half a century had gone, but the interval that separated the boy from the man was as a line. On one side memory had shown the happy child of yesterday; on the other now stood the unhappy man of to-day. He could not grasp the hand of any friend, nor could he appeal to any familiar face, for in all that new city time had seemingly left no friend to greet the wanderer.

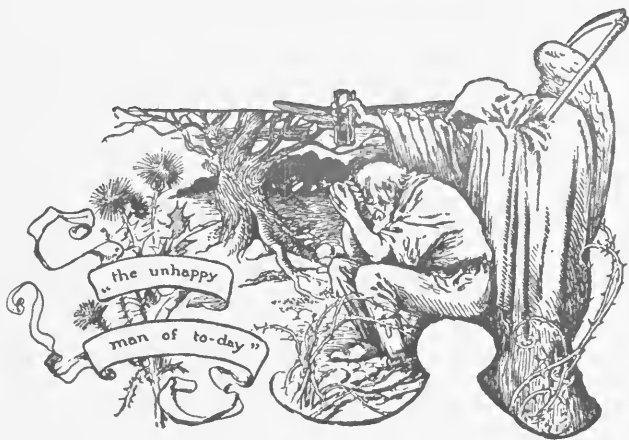


S C R O G G I N S

“Tell me,” he said to a passer-by, “tell me where I can find the——” What should old Scroggins ask to find? Stammering, he repeated, “The—the——” then hesitatingly completed the sentence with the word, “graveyard?”

“Which graveyard? The old, or the new one?”

Scroggins was puzzled. His question had been only contrived for the emergency; the answer was unexpected. He looked at his vein-furrowed hand; instinctively, he ran his



THE OLD HOME

fingers over his wrinkled cheek; a helpless expression came over his face. The stranger stood expectant.

“Et don’t seem so long ago since I stood in et, but I guess thet what you call the *old* graveyard is the one fer me,” he falteringly replied.

“Come,” said the stranger, for Scroggins’ appearance and manner had touched a sympathetic spot; “I will lead you to it.”



CHAPTER III

THE GRAVEYARD OF OLD

IN a short time they stood before a close board-fence, flush with the sidewalk. The guide opened a door and pointed within. As Scroggins turned his back to the street, his companion saw a tear trickle down his rough cheek. No word was spoken. The door closed, and Scroggins stood in the old graveyard.



THE GRAVEYARD

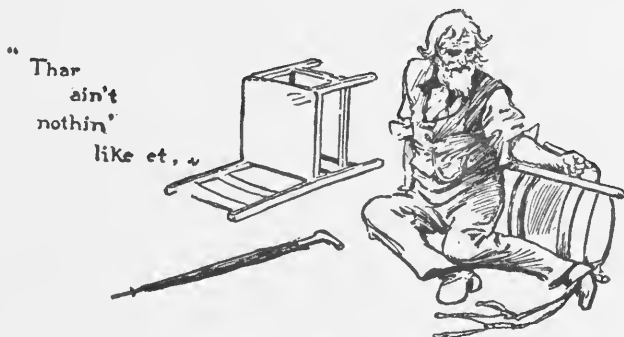
Yes, this graveyard alone survived out of all the past; and had it not been for the protection of the church within whose shadow it stood, it, too, must long since have disappeared. The church itself, scarred and weather-worn, stood with boarded windows, as if in resistful protest; its eyes were closed to the present. Of all the village he had known, this little graveyard, with the modest house of worship in its edge, alone was left to Scroggins. Here the hills and ravines were as once he knew them, only now they were more thickly surmounted by green hillocks. Man's



S C R O G G I N S

heartless civilisation had not, as yet, presumed to desecrate the village burying-ground.

Slowly Scroggins passed from tomb to tomb. For the first time in his wanderings he became concerned in art, a phase of art that has interested mankind of all nations and conditions—the graveyard art, the only cosmopolitan art, the only art that lives. Scroggins read the names of men and women whom he had known as a child, read them slowly, and muttered to himself as he did so; then he passed on, again to stand and decipher. Occasionally he found an old, old stone, where he remembered to have stood bareheaded beside an open grave, in the awe-spell that child-



THE GRAVEYARD

hood feels in the presence of death, and at last he reached a little mound, one of many in a long row of little mounds. Here he halted for a moment, then stooped, opened his clasp-knife, and scraped the green moss from the face of the small brown-stone slab. Slowly he deciphered, in the weather-softened surface, the words:

JENNIE SCROGGINS,
Poorhouse Child.

ONLY SISTER OF JAMES SCROGGINS.

Died June 10, 1809.

Aged ten years.

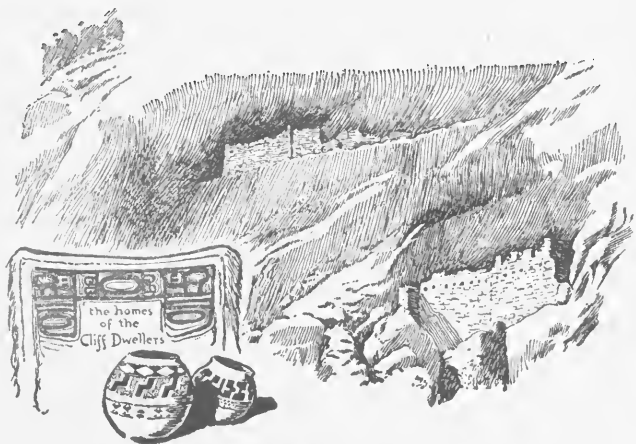
Old Scroggins sank prone upon the ground.
A flood of painful recollections crushed upon



Old
SCROGGINS
sang
a
crude ditty

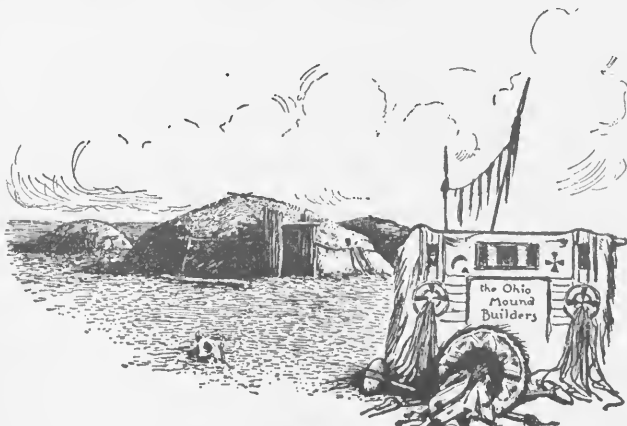
S C R O G G I N S

him. The stone was damp and water-sogged where, with trembling hands, he had just scraped away the bits of moss, from which scampered little brown creatures that had never before been disturbed. His fingers, from which the open knife had dropped, rested against the chilly base, but the coldness of the tombstone's earth-soaked dampness was unfelt. The face of the child, that had been revived by the pure white pearl in his palm when the waters of the sunny gulf rocked the boat of the Indian diver, was before him



THE GRAVEYARD

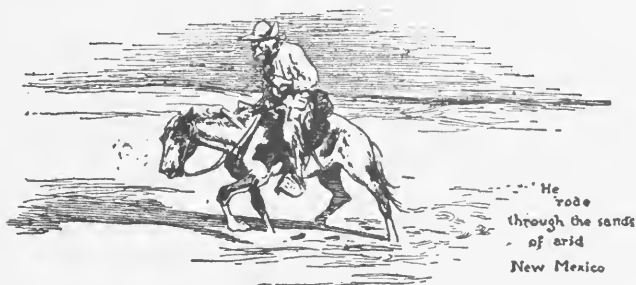
again. The present had fled—the old man lived in the past. He was young again—
young, in the very face of the confronting evidences of age. No longer did he think of the wrinkled face, he saw no more the knotty finger-joints, nor the swollen veins on the back of his hands, which were covered with the brown hair of age. In his mind, the great trees in the graveyard shrank to saplings—they, too, were young. The wheel of time had turned backward, the light from within possessed the man of years; the city without was again a village; Scroggins was a boy.



CHAPTER IV

BROTHER AND SISTER

A TINY little girl she was, a sturdy boy he, but neither could recall father or mother. If ever they had a parent, no mention was made by others of that fact. Even the children with whom they played evaded the subject. If they knew the story, they did not speak of it. They were brother and sister and, so far as he knew, his sister and himself were the only Scrogginses in the world. Together



BROTHER AND SISTER

they lived in the poorhouse, but, unaware of class distinctions, felt no humiliation because they were poorhouse children. Nor were they conscious of the loneliness, for each was by nature sanguine, and the love each bore the other was the full measure of what most children scatter over father, mother, brother, and sister.

She had been sleeping more than fifty years, and he was now past sixty; but under the influence of this memory-touch, the past and the present met. Together they played their childish games, together they ran errands; and occasionally earned a penny which, as their expenses were paid by the county, they



What
cared he
for
a brace
of brutes?

S C R O G G I N S

kept for themselves. Thus it was that their little treasure increased to a few silver dollars, and at last the silver pieces were exchanged for a gold coin. Happy day! Rich old Scroggins had again found the "easy place" in life, resting in an old graveyard, dreaming of the poorhouse!

Scroggins, once again the poorhouse child, smiled as he had rarely smiled since he became a millionaire; smiled, as other miserable, gold-bound slaves might smile and laugh could they but throw aside the cause of their dis-



BROTHER AND SISTER

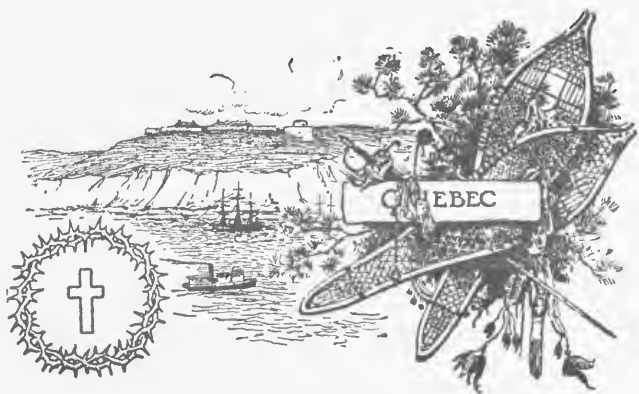
content, and live in the memory of poverty's joys. Blessed be the illusion that brings a smile to such as tough old Scroggins! The scenes of his childhood passed before his mind as a panorama, in which again he chuckled over the pleasures of other days; he romped and danced on the poorhouse green; he lolled in the grass of departed summers; he rolled the snowballs of vanished winters.

Ah, the smile disappears! Has the illusion vanished? Is Scroggins himself again? No. He lies still upon the damp ground, uncon-



S C R O G G I N S

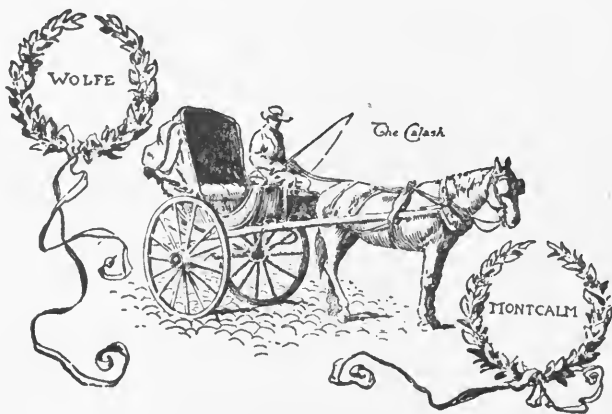
scious of the present. He is yet an air-castle child, but the misery of a long-forgotten grief is again upon him—Sister Jennie is sick!



CHAPTER V

“I HAVEN’T ANYTHING ELSE BUT SISTER”

AN approaching shadow had cast its chill over the responsive brother’s heart, and before the doctor suspected danger the boy felt that deepest sorrow was coming. He tiptoed up and down the cheerless corridors, or crouched in the gloom of the hall before the silent room.



S C R O G G I N S

At last, the doctor became disturbed. Concern showed in his face.

Little Scroggins could not doubt that expression. He slipped away, and took from its hiding place the one gold coin, the treasure of two hearts, and waited at Jennie's door. When the doctor appeared, the boy, without a word, thrust the coin into his hand, and looked up pleadingly into the face of the helpless man. "No, no, child! I cannot take your money." The tender-hearted physician handed it back, and turned away. "Please, doctor!" murmured little Scroggins; "other



NOTHING BUT SISTER

boys have mammas and papas, but I haven't anything else but Sister."

The doctor silently led him into the room. "Kiss Sister good-night," he said. The boy threw himself beside the bed, stroked the silken tresses, and caressed the thin hands. The girl smiled. The hair of his child-sister (phantom locks now, but as real to him as in other days) was within old Scroggins's palm. The great sorrow of his life was again a reality. "Sister, Sister, speak ter me!" The old man spoke aloud. Beneath that spell, his hand smoothed the neglected grass on the



"The boy
threw
himself
beside
the
bed"

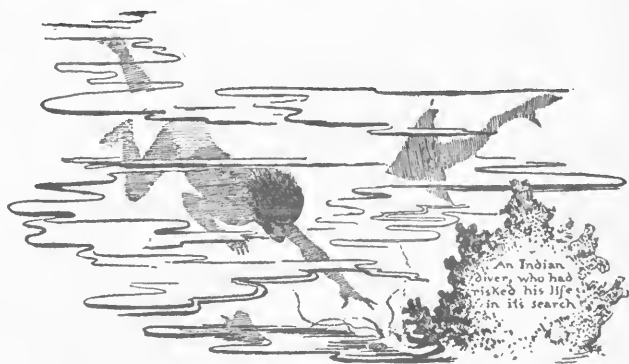
S C R O G G I N S

little hillock. "Sister, speak ter me!" he pleaded.

Evening had now fallen. Twilight and a wandering stranger found withered old Scroggins kneeling over the neglected grave of the child of long ago, muttering, "Speak ter me, Sister; speak ter me!"

"The night is nearly here, my friend," said the man. "Would we not better depart?"

Startled, Scroggins arose. The child-life in which he had been living vanished, the tombstones rose up, like shadows they came again to view. Without a word he turned his weary



NOTHING BUT SISTER

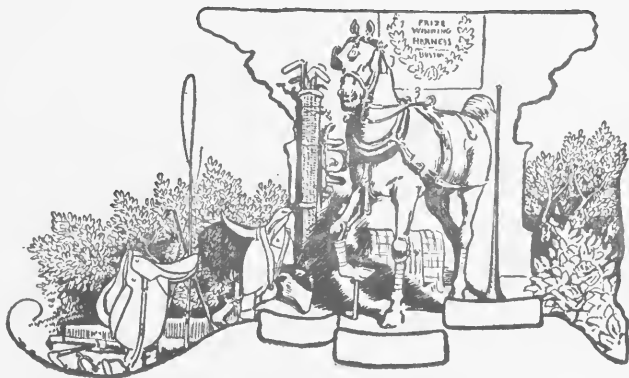
footsteps toward the busy world that, outside the graveyard fence, was treading its own way past this old cemetery toward another that, somewhere in the future, lies across the end of each man's path.



CHAPTER VI

THE BEQUEST

SCROGGINS sought the hotel, and sat long in meditation in his room. "Thar's no use in talkin'," he muttered, "I've got ter git rid of this money. I've got ter stop this blame foolishness, and go back ter work." After another period of meditation he rang the bell, and asked that the landlord be sent to him. Upon his appearance, Scroggins



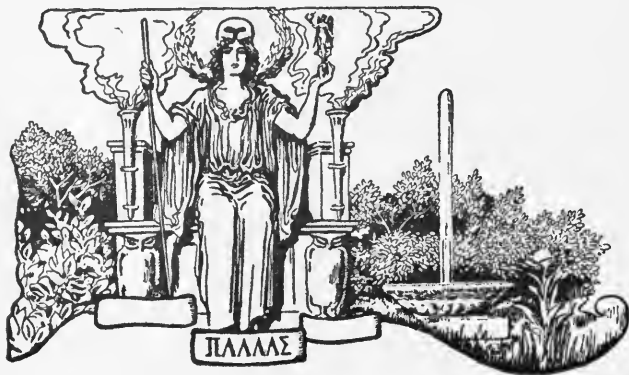
T H E B E Q U E S T

stated that he desired the mayor of the city to call on him. To this the landlord demurred, stating that it was more befitting for Scroggins to seek the mayor.

"You may be right," said Scroggins; "but ef the mayor don't come ter this room in less 'n an hour, this blasted city loses a gift."

The landlord looked at him incredulously. Scroggins took out his watch and, in reply to the questioning look, said, "One hour, I says, and I mean jest one hour."

The landlord hesitated. The appearance of the old man did not indicate that he could make much of a gift to anyone.



S C R O G G I N S

“Five minutes hev passed,” said Scroggins.

The landlord, too artful to offend a guest, said: “My good man, be reasonable. This is untimely. It is the mayor’s supper hour. Is there necessity for such haste?”

“You hev lost more’n a minute,” said Scroggins testily.

“What reason have I to believe that you can, or will, fulfil the promise you make?”

“The proof will be given when the hour hes passed. Ef the mayor don’t visit me within this hour, a stunnin’ gift es lost ter this city, and you will hev acted the fool.”

“Well,” musingly muttered the landlord,



T H E B E Q U E S T

“this is a strange occurrence. If I call the mayor——” He hesitated.

“You’re a gump ef you don’t,” retorted Scroggins.

“If I call the mayor,” continued the landlord, “I may become an innocent party to a practical joke——”

“Ef you don’t call him, you may bet your life you will,” said Scroggins.

“To a practical joke, or a tragedy,” said the landlord, completing the sentence.

“Five minutes more air gone.”

The landlord eyed Scroggins from head to foot. All he saw was an ordinary, comfor-



S C R O G G I N S

tably dressed old man, with weather-beaten face.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Scroggins."

"What are you?"

"What am I?" repeated Scroggins.

"What am I? A stage-driver from the Rocky Mountains. I was raised in the poor-house, here."

"I'll not call the mayor."

The landlord turned to the door. Scroggins thrust the open watch before his face.



T H E B E Q U E S T

“Forty-three minutes are left you yit.” The sharp-eyed landlord caught sight of the workmanship of the watch, its make, and finish. He stopped and said, “I will go.”

Scroggins was not surprised at the landlord’s decision. He had learned that the mayor boarded at the hotel, and could come to him without trouble. In a few minutes that dignitary entered, accompanied by the landlord.

“My friend,” said the mayor, “can I do anything for you?”

“Yes,” said Scroggins, “you kin relieve me of some money. Sit down.”



S C R O G G I N S

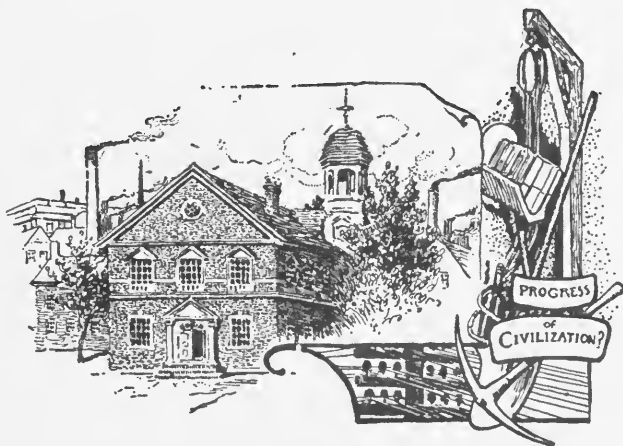
The old man hitched his chair opposite. Their knees touched.

"Be quick, my good fellow. I've an engagement shortly."

"I haven't got but little ter say, but I want ter say et bad. I ain't no book-larned man, and I ain't got a smooth tongue. I ain't no city chap, neither, but I kin tell what I feels, and I hev got feelin's es well es city chaps."

"Of course, my good fellow," said the mayor, in a kindly tone.

"What I wants ter tell you most is thet et

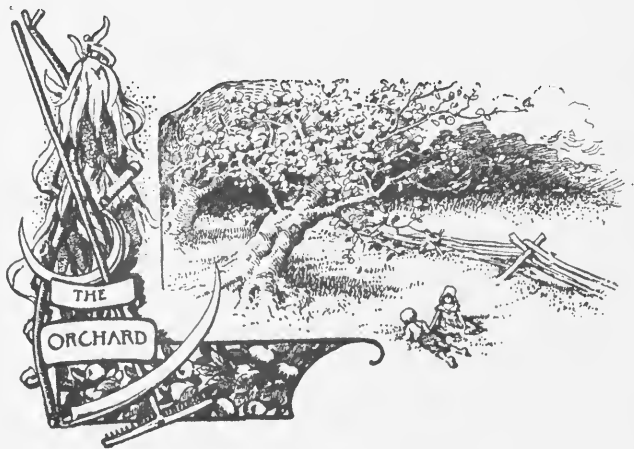


T H E B E Q U E S T

don't do no good fer a feller ter git rich, less 'n he keeps at work, er less 'n his money *makes* him work."

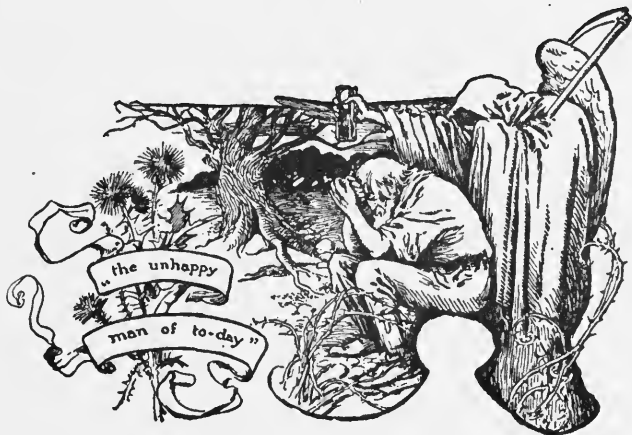
"To some of us the subject of riches is of no personal concern," said the mayor, as he surveyed Scroggins' rough garments. His reply was personal, and Scroggins felt it.

"I'm qualified ter speak, sir; and I tells you that fer a feller like me, thar ain't no fun in settin' down and lookin' at nothin'. Ner thar ain't no comfort in travellin' like a wild goose. What's the use in tryin' ter eat up a million



S C R O G G I N S

dollars when a feller ain't got no appetite, and only one stomach? The rich man with only one stomach's ter be pitied, Mr. Mayor. Et's a mistake ter git rich, less 'n you know how ter think. I ain't got no eddycation, and I can't think of nothin' but stage-drivin'. I'm qualified ter speak, I says, fer I'm rich, sir, and hev tried ter enj'y myself with everything thet money will buy; but, Mr. Mayor, et ain't no use. I don't keer fer nothin' but thet old stage on the gulch road. I sits and tries ter think like eddycated men does. I listens ter the talk of people 'bout me, but et ain't no use.



T H E B E Q U E S T

I can't think. Now, Mr. Mayor, I wants ter help other people ter think, and then I purposes ter go back ter the stage-line, and I don't want this dev'lish money ter bother me no more. I hev drawed the lines on the hosses till I'm old. Stage-drivin's my bisness, and I knows et, and I wants ter die a-holdin' of them lines. Sence I left thet job, I've been miserable, damnation miserable! I hev seen the hosses, the cliffs, the creek, the stage, the passengers on the gulch-road, every day and every hour sence I war fool 'nough ter leave the gulch-line. I sees them when I'm awake, and



S C R O G G I N S

dreams 'bout them when I sleeps. I can't think of nothin' else. I wants ter be jolted on a stage, but I don't want no other feller ter drive, fer I wants ter hold the lines myself. I wants ter go down Boulder Hill ag'in on the box, my foot on the brake. I wants ter freeze my fingers in the winter, and brown my scalp in the summer. I wants ter feel the melted snow trickle down my back, and I wants ter scrape the frost off'n my whiskers. I wants ter fight, ter git shot, and ter shoot back ag'in. Et don't make no diff'rence, Mr. Mayor, how rich and ign'rant a man is, ef he



T H E B E Q U E S T

only hes sense 'nough ter keep on workin' after gittin' rich; but ef he tries ter quit work an' enj'y himself by lookin' at things with his eyes, an' thinkin' with his no 'count brain, an' stuffin' his one stomach like et war a hogshhead, he air a fool. He can't think of nothin' but work; he don't keer fer nothin' else, and he don't know nothin' else. I've got my wind ag'in, and I'm goin' back ter the gulch."

"But, my good man, you are old. Your place is filled by some other man. Perhaps you cannot again get it."

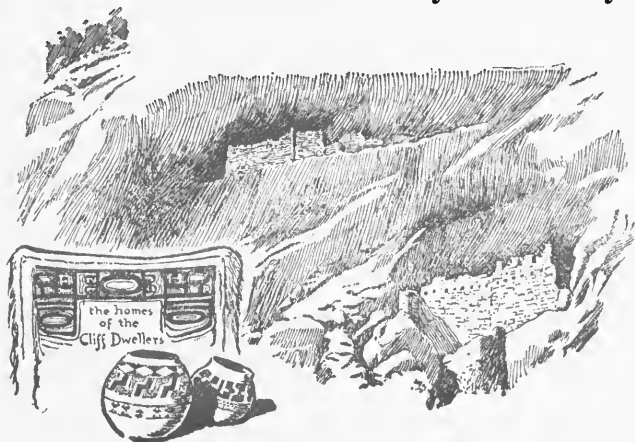
"Pardner," said Scroggins, "thar ain't no



S C R O G G I N S

question 'bout my gittin' that place. Yer see, I warn't dead sure 'bout the outcome of this here trip, when the claim panned rich and I started East, an' so I said ter myself, ' Scroggins, mebbe you'll want ter come back ter rest yourself a-settin' on the box ag'in.' I didn't want no questions raised 'bout my right ter the restin'-place, an' so I jest bought all of the stock of the gulch-line. Mr. Mayor, I owns the line. When I picks up them ribbons, thar won't be no agent ter say, 'Put 'em down, Scroggins!' ”

The eccentric old man's story seemed as yet



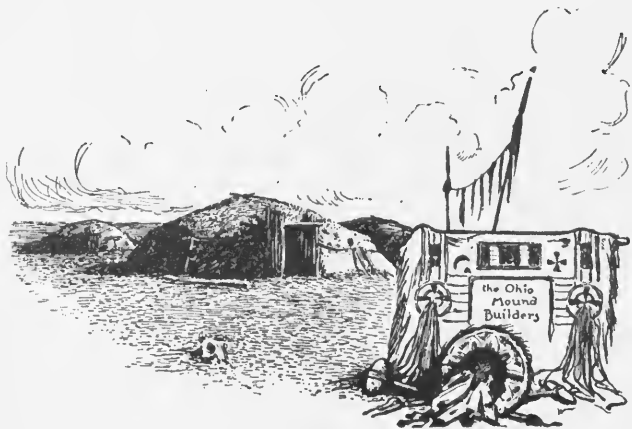
T H E B E Q U E S T

to have no connection with the visit of the mayor, who adroitly intimated as much.

“Yes,” said Scroggins, “I’m comin’ ter the p’int. I wants ter unload a million er more dollars on this town.”

His hearers now seemed concerned. “You wish to make a bequest?” said the mayor.

“Cut out them big words, Mr. Mayor. I wants ter leave a million dollars ter build a house on the hill near this city, ter teach young people how ter think. Et air a sin ter grow old, an’ not know how ter think. Things war ag’in me when I war young, an’ et’s too late



S C R O G G I N S

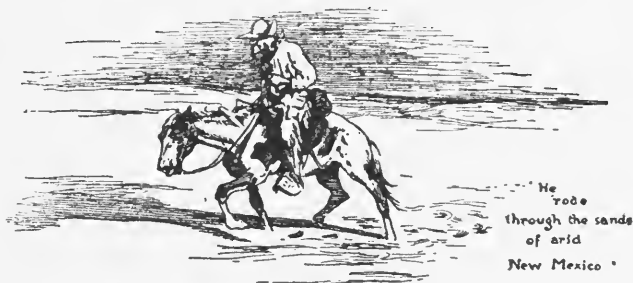
now fer me. But et ain't too late fer childern what's ter come yet. They'd better hev thinkin' sense than money."

"Do you wish to endow a university?"

"Adzactly!—stone front, marble hall, granite porch, slate roof. I've got my idea, but can't think et all out. I purposes ter put up the cash ter buy the land, ter build the house, and then ter leave a million dollars ter run the thing."

"You astonish me! Can you be in earnest? Are you responsible for your remarks? What are your conditions?"

"I'm 'sponsible fer what I says, and I hev only one favour ter ask, and thet ain't a big one. We might es well come ter the p'int.

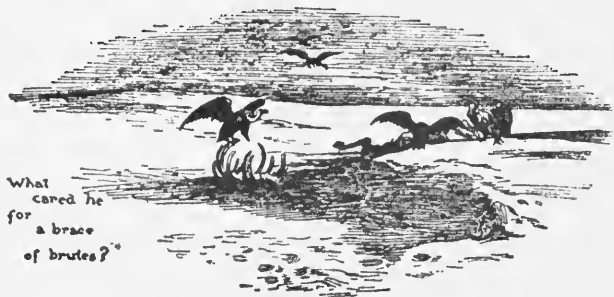


T H E B E Q U E S T

Et air this: The poorhouse-d'rectors shell hev the right ter app'int a trustee in the Eenstitution, and any child of the poorhouse thet kin git in, shell go et free. I'll pay all the bills."

The mayor was puzzled. Could the man be responsible? Scroggins, quick in reading faces, caught the trend of his thought. "Bring the lawyer and the Jedge, Mr. Mayor, and you will see ef Scroggins air a-drivin' straight." He pointed to the door. The mayor and the landlord bowed themselves out.

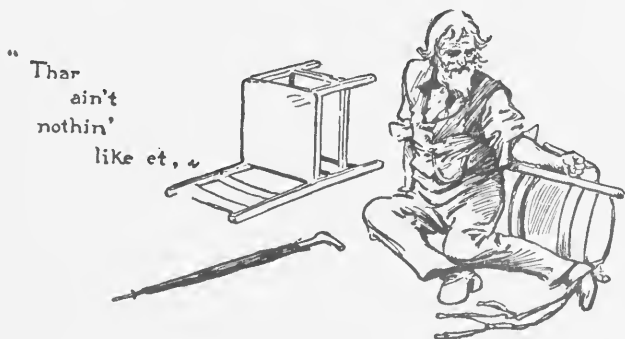
Then Scroggins sat down and chuckled to himself. From time to time he clenched his hands as if he were holding the lines of a coach. He next went to the door of his room and locked it, removed his coat, unbuttoned



S C R O G G I N S

his suspenders, tied their ends to the chair in front, grasped his old umbrella as if it were a whip, and with his face aglow, sat on a stool belabouring the chair. Drawing first one line and then the other, old Scroggins sang a crude ditty, then scolded at a misbehaving horse, and finally tumbled the chairs and himself together on the floor in an imaginary wreck.

“Thar ain’t nothin’ like et!” he cried enthusiastically. “These damn fools settin’ ’round and readin’ ’bout other folks’s consarns, talkin’ gossip, readin’ gossip, *thinkin’* gossip *fer pleasure!*—ha! ha!—air welcome ter the money. Scroggins air goin’ back ter the gulch-line!”



CHAPTER VII

CHILD-LOVE

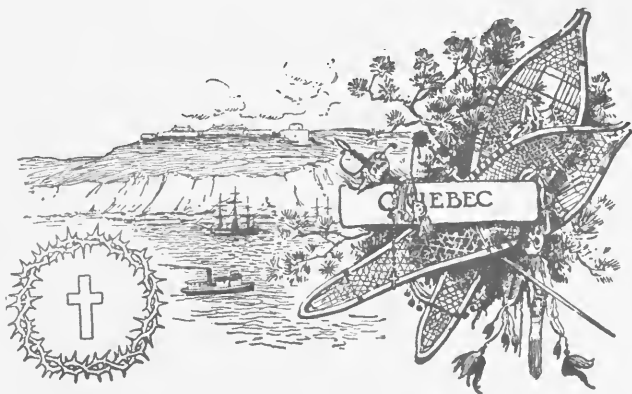
A CHANGE came abruptly over his spirit, The improvised whip dropped from his hand, and while the grotesque play-horses were yet before him, Scroggins turned to the battered old wide-throated carpet-sack that stood beside the bed. Opening it, he took out garment after garment, which he threw in disorder upon the floor. At the bottom of the satchel, wrapped in coloured paper, lay a



Old
SCROGGINS
sang
a
crude ditty

S C R O G G I N S

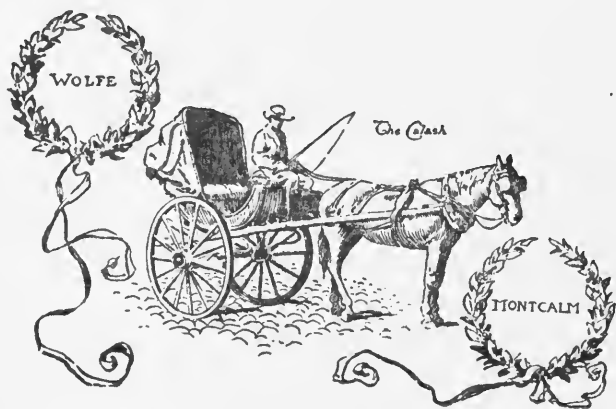
small parcel, which he held thoughtfully a moment. Then, with deliberation, clumsily, and yet aiming to be gentle, he untied the faded blue ribbon that encircled the worn covering. Beneath it was tattered tissue, which even his great care could not prevent from tearing again as the creases opened. His rough fingers were more accustomed to stiff leather than to fabric such as this. At length the casings were all removed and neatly spread upon the bed; and upon the floor sat Scroggins, holding in his hand a little music-box.



C H I L D - L O V E

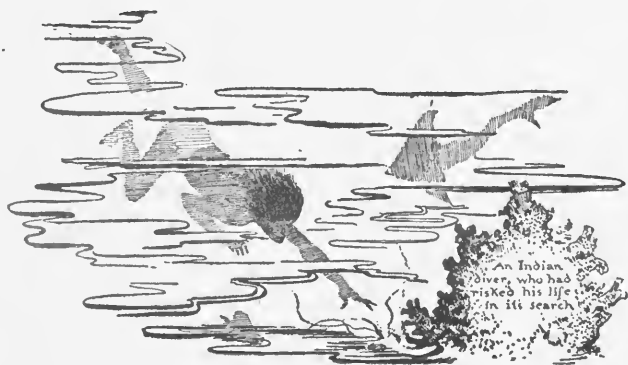
Once more the mind of the man turned to the past, forgotten, so far as he knew, by all save himself. The broken train of thought that had so recently taken possession of the wanderer was again renewed. Before him stood the great building from which, as a child, he had gone out into the world, one year after the passing of the dear little sister whom his fortune, a single coin of gold, could not save.

He had a new home now, in a family where work earned him the right to live, and where he worked as do boys from the poorhouse when taken to a home where poorhouse-boys



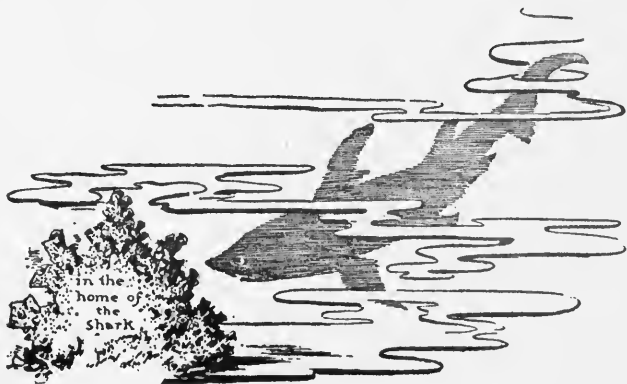
S C R O G G I N S

are wanted. Recollection led him on. In this home the years passed. Young Scroggins was strong, ruddy of cheek, robust of frame. The life of a farmer-boy in New England's fresh, bracing air, nourished by the healthful food of a New England farmer's home, had given the youth both wealth of appetite and pride of muscle. He was scarcely aware of this, and yet the young daughter of the good man who had given Scroggins a home found it pleasant to be near the strong youth who worked so faithfully, and who never tired in his endeavours to show her a kindness. They were children together when he came to her



C H I L D - L O V E

home, she being the only child of the well-to-do farmer. But they were children no longer. Unconsciously, love had replaced the friendship of childhood. Neither appreciated the change that had come upon them. Though now a man in size and strength, he was yet Jim Scroggins. She was still Lucy, but with her the artlessness of girlhood had passed into the loveliness of maidenhood. Thus it was that, before even the mother was aware of the change brought by the passing years, the young man loved her daughter, and she returned his love. As yet, Scroggins had said no word of love.



S C R O G G I N S

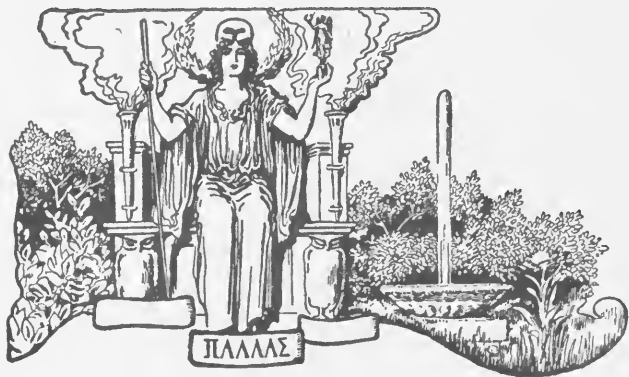
It was now winter, a cold, New England winter. Scroggins was much in the house, for the snow was deep, and little but the chores could be done on the snow-bound farm. He was much with Lucy, peeling apples, cutting pumpkins, moulding candles, helping in the roughest part of the kitchen-work, and assisting in the lighter house-work. And yet he said no word of love. In the long winter evenings the lad would sit in the chimney corner and gaze at Lucy, as she sat sewing beside the stand on which flickered the tallow candle. From out the shadows he watched the play of light and shade, as the tiny flame



C H I L D - L O V E

cast its gleaming throb of graded yellow over the face of the girl. In silence he drank in the sweetness of the scene, and grew to envy the flicker of the candle-light that bathed her face, while he sat obscure in the gloomy corner, gazing and worshipping.

Who could have foretold that these stolen glances were to lead to the second great sorrow that came into the life of the poor-house-child? Too plainly they told the mother the story of his growing love, and one morning, when the lad had driven to a distant village, she held a long and earnest conversa-



tion with her husband. Scroggins was the subject of discussion.

When he returned, a little packet that he could hardly afford to purchase was down in his great overcoat pocket, a glow of happiness on his face, anticipatory of the joy this little present would bring Lucy. When the parcel, wrapped in tissue, had been safely placed in her hands, the sacrifice was repaid a thousand-fold by the artless expression of her thanks the girl gave him, whom she had grown to love. But, already, the seeds of Scroggins' second great sorrow had been sown in the pleasant candle-glances which he had thought





"AND GREW TO ENVY THE FLICKER OF THE CANDLE-LIGHT THAT BATHED HER FACE."

C H I L D - L O V E

unseen by all. The bitter fruit was destined soon to be his portion.

One Sunday, soon after his joyous offering had been made, while Scroggins sat in his attic room, a knock came at the door, then the face of Lucy's mother appeared. In her hand she held the parcel the lad had given her daughter. With motherly interest, and voice that was kind, very kind, she spoke of more than Scroggins had ever dreamed. Then, while the youth was stunned by the suddenness of it all, the offering was returned. He made no reply.

The watchful mother turned to depart, but



S C R O G G I N S

as she closed the door, it was reopened by Scroggins.

"Please come back a minute; just a minute," he pleaded.

The mother could but accede.

"Please, ma'am, may I ask a question? It's all so sudden, ma'am."

"Go on, James."

"I hadn't thought of *love* before, ma'am, but I guess you're right 'bout it. I see myself, now." This was said so quietly that the mother felt relieved.

"Love comes without thought, James."



C H I L D - L O V E

"I guess you know how it is, ma'am, else you wouldn't have been so sure. But that ain't what I wish to say. It's this: Have I done Lucy any harm in loving her as I did?"

"Certainly not."

"And has it hurt me any, ma'am?"

"No."

"Nor it hasn't hurt you?"

"No."

"Thank you, ma'am. But that ain't all I want to know."

"Go on, James."



* The boy
threw
himself
beside
the
bed *

S C R O G G I N S

"Other boys have loved other girls, ma'am?"

"Yes."

"I thought so, ma'am. It isn't bad for other boys and girls to love each other, ma'am?"

"No."

"Maybe I didn't love Lucy enough?"

"It isn't that, James." The lad looked puzzled.

"There wouldn't have been any Lucy, ma'am, if I hadn't jumped into the mill-race



C H I L D - L O V E

once. She had nigh 'bout floated to the end of the sluice. You needn't have feared any-one hurting her while I was living."

The mother's face coloured. The lad continued:

"I'm strong and healthy, ma'am?"

"Yes."

"I haven't many bad habits?"

"None at all, James."

"Thank you, ma'am. I can farm like a man. Work comes easy to me, ma'am."

"You are the best hand we ever had on the farm, James."



S C R O G G I N S

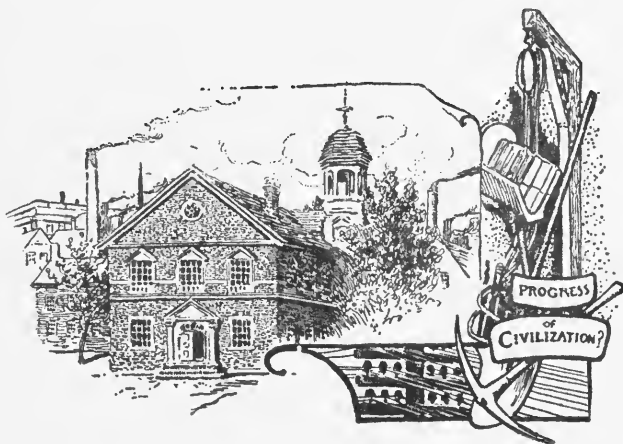
“And I belong to the church?”

“Yes. The minister speaks of you in the highest terms.”

“Thank you, ma’am. You won’t think hard if I ask a question, ma’am? It’s so sudden.”

“Go on, James.”

“If I haven’t done Lucy any harm, nor you either; if I am not bad, and can work, and ain’t afraid to drown for her; if I belong to the church, as all good people should; if I am strong and healthy and have no bad habits;



C H I L D - L O V E

if it is not wrong for boys to love girls, I ask, ma'am, what I have done?"

For once, the woman hesitated. The final question had been "so sudden" to her. Then she replied.

"It is not what *you* have done, James."

"I'm all alone, ma'am. There is no other Scroggins."

"That's the trouble, James. If——"

"Go on, ma'am. If what?"

"If there had been a——"

"You needn't go on, ma'am!" The lad's



S C R O G G I N S

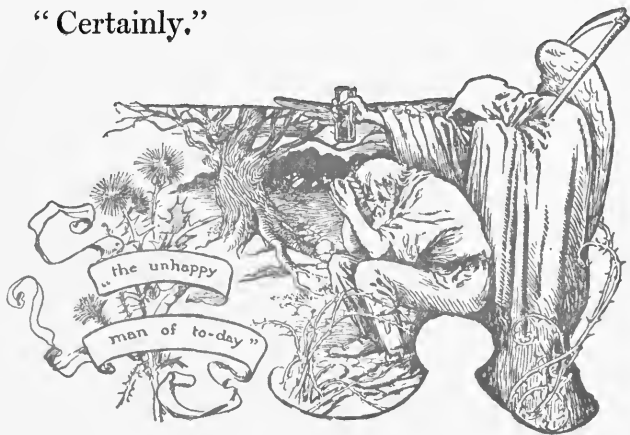
loneliness assumed a phase it had never done before. "You needn't go on, ma'am, unless you can tell me something I can do to make up for what some other man *didn't* do."

"Nothing, James."

"It's wicked for me to think it, ma'am, it's awful for me to say it. But if I could find the coward who deserted Sister and me, and let us go to the poorhouse, I'd choke his life out, ma'am!" The Sister brought a new train of thought.

"May I ask just one more question, ma'am?"

"Certainly."



C H I L D L O V E

"If Sister had lived, couldn't she have been like other girls?"

"I am afraid not, James. Society forbids."

"But it wasn't *her* fault, ma'am?"

"Nor is it yours, James."

The fingers of the lad's right hand clutched together. "It seems to me that if I had Society by the throat, I'd squeeze that, too!"

The boy arose and opened the door. As the woman passed out he took her by the arm. "I haven't said anything to Lucy, and I shall not give her any trouble. It's mighty hard, ma'am, but I'm going off, forever."



S C R O G G I N S

That night, in the depths of the New England winter, Scroggins stood beside a grave in the children's row of the poorhouse cemetery.

"Sister," he said; "Sister, when you left me all alone, it was awful hard; but, Sister, I'm glad now you're gone. It's easier fer such as you and me to be dead than living!" Then he arose, picked up a carpet-sack that rested by his side, and tramped away in the bright moonlight through the deep snow.

All this, and more, came back to old man Scroggins, as he sat on the floor, beside the



C H I L D - L O V E

bed whereon rested the little music-box, his gift in the days that had passed to the girl he had loved with all the strength of growing manhood. He was very tired, for the unusual excitement of the day, the strain of the pathetic experiences and recollections, the lateness of the hour, had worn him out. His head dropped, slumber came upon him; and, thus, with the old music-box in his rough hand, with the tender touch of faded ambitions, the reminiscences of a saddened youthful love and of shattered hopes in his heart, the old man slept.



CHAPTER VIII

LUCY MOORE

WHEN he awoke the morning had well advanced. He cast his eye wonderingly about the room. The improvised chair-horse, the scattered garments, the old carpet-sack by his side, the little music-box on the bed, near where his weary head had rested, were about and before him. He rolled his eyes and pinched his flesh. Then, as comes reality to one amid strange scenes when awakened from a vivid dream which in its complications connects the

"Thar
ain't
nothin'
like et, &



L U C Y M O O R E

real with the unreal, it all came slowly back. The wandering in the churchyard, the incidents of the past day, the closing scene in the last tableau of his life, were not more of fact than was the dream which had followed so close that it seemed as though no break came between the reality of recollection and the not less real vision of the night. Slowly the sluggish mind of the man untangled itself from the debris of past recollection and the vision of a future that the dream had presented. "I've got ter do it," he muttered. "I'll try and find Lucy Moore." He arose awkwardly,



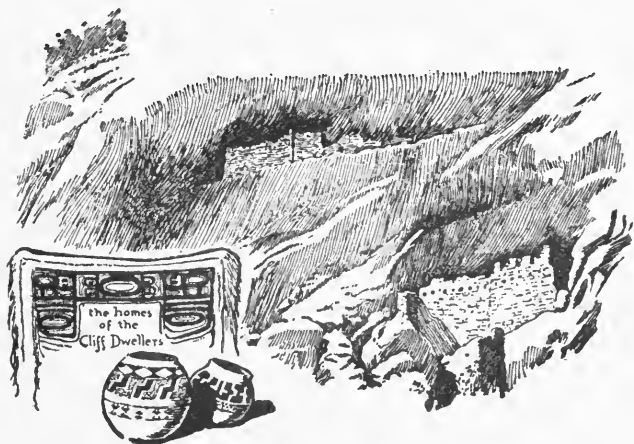
Old
SCROGGINS
sang
a
crude ditty

S C R O G G I N S

crammed the garments in the carpet-sack, stood the chairs upright, washed his bearded face, combed his coarse hair, took a drink of whiskey from a capacious bottle, and then went to breakfast. Next he sought the landlord and abruptly said, "Once thar war a fam'ly named Moore lived out on the South road."

"I have not been here long enough to become acquainted in the country. My business is mainly with travellers."

"Never mind," said Scroggins; "I know



L U C Y M O O R E

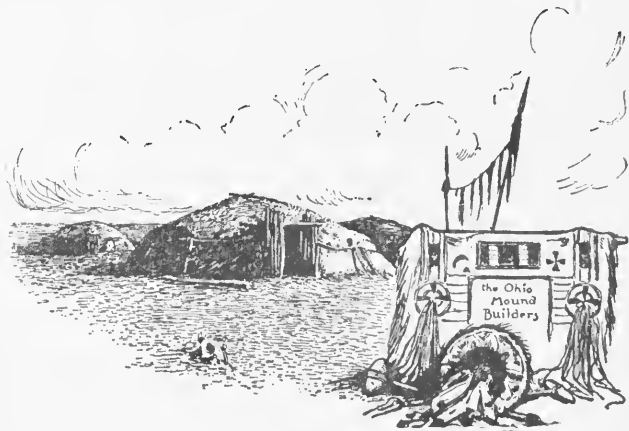
the road, and I know the place." Then he sought the bank.

"I've a mind to make a deposit account, if you're willin' ter keer fer the fund."

"What is the name?" The man of business asked in a business way.

"Lucy Moore. Here's the securities." Scroggins placed a large envelope in his hand. "My name's Scroggins. If she don't call fer it, I'll take the fund back."

The officer methodically opened the envelope. A look of surprise came over his face, and well it might. Such a special deposit was



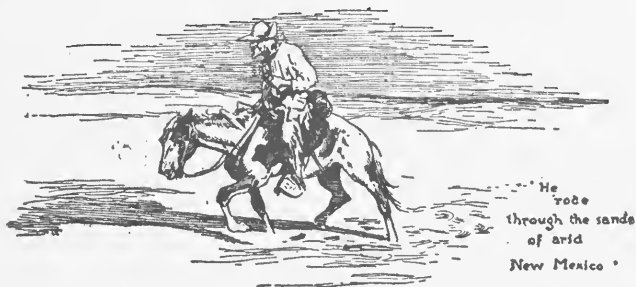
S C R O G G I N S

rarely made in a bank of this little city near the hill.

“The signature of Miss Moore is necessary.”

“It’s Lucy Moore, who lived on the South Road. Mebbe she’s dead. If she don’t call and sign it, I’ll take it back, I say. Make out the book in her name, and give me the docyments.”

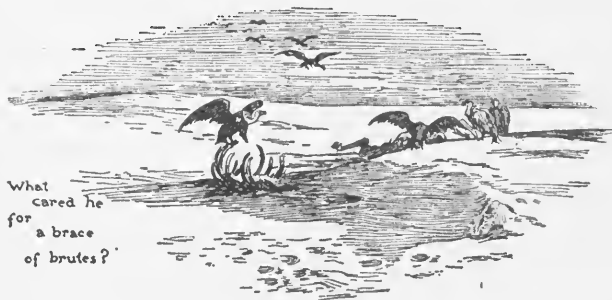
In the way banks do business, this was done; and when Scroggins departed he carried a small deposit-book in the name of Lucy Moore, and a pocket cheque-book. Past the old churchyard in the heart of the city, past the new one on the outskirts, past the poor-house, now a large institution; out and into



“He
rode
through the sands
of arid
New Mexico.”

L U C Y M O O R E

the country beyond, went Scroggins. Here he struck a road that led due south. Tough old Scroggins! Tramping was to him as natural as holding the stage-coach lines. On he went. He gave no heed to anyone, nor did the passer-by concern himself with the rough old wayfarer who shuffled along in the dust of the South Road. Finally Scroggins stopped. To the right, on a rise, stood an old farmhouse. Before it a meadow stretched to the road; behind it lay a young orchard; to the right and left were cultivated fields. A brook meandered through the meadow, its banks graced by an occasional great elm. In the shade of one a flock of sheep lazily chewed their cuds. A milch cow and a young calf

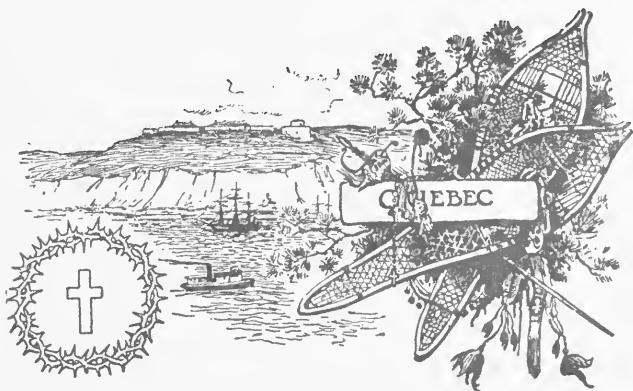


What
cared he
for
a brace
of brutes?

S C R O G G I N S

stood beyond them. "It's the same old place," said Scroggins, "only, the old orchard's gone, and so is the hickory tree that stood over yonder. Guess lightnin' struck it."

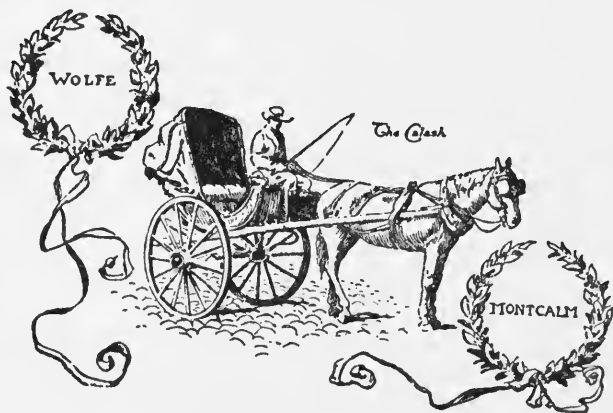
Hesitatingly he passed into the meadow. "This old brook hain't changed a bit," he muttered. The cow looked up, then resumed her occupation of licking the back of her calf. "And if I didn't know it war fifty years ago, I'd bet thet's old Brindle! Seems es if I'd better let thet calf inter the barnyard-lot, it ain't best fer it to run with the cow." Agreeable to his thought, scarcely thinking of the im-



L U C Y M O O R E

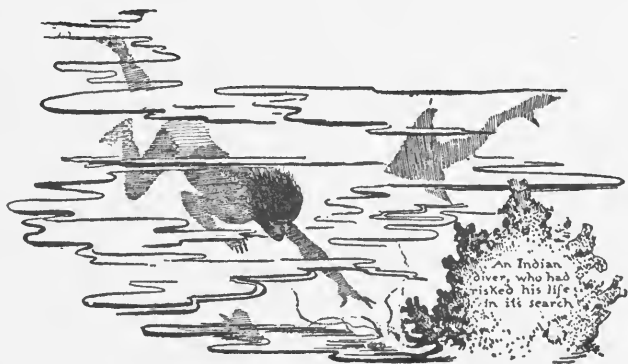
propriety of the liberty he was taking, Scroggins picked up a stick, drove cow and calf to the adjacent barn-lot, let down the upper bars, and adroitly lifted the calf over into the lot.

“There! ” he said, “if Lucy Moore owns you, I’ve done her a good turn. If you’re some other feller’s critter, I hain’t hurt him none. It seems mightily like old times!” He stopped abruptly, for as he raised his eyes to the house, standing in the back door, just across the narrow space that separated the barn-lot from the kitchen, stood a white-haired



S C R O G G I N S

woman. She was gazing at Scroggins. "I'm in fer it now, sure," he continued, "and it's pow'rful like the dream!" Strange how timid a coarse man can become under new conditions, or under discomposing influences. Scroggins advanced hesitatingly, but instead of going directly towards the woman he passed diagonally around the house, then towards the front door, and knocked. The door was opened by the woman he had seen. The face was pleasant, the expression peaceful and kindly, the hair snow-white, the calico dress neat, with apron of the olden style. Wrinkles were in the cheek, and furrows in the



L U C Y M O O R E

forehead, but they made a graceful setting to a charming home-picture, such as often appeared in New England rural scenes. No need to tell Scroggins that this was the Lucy of other days. It was as a picture of a landscape in autumn that one has left in spring-time.

“Will you not come in?” The voice of Lucy, too.

“Thank ye, ma’am, if ye don’t mind, I’ll stop a bit.” The same room, nearly the same furniture. On the wall hung two enlarged portraits. The father and mother of Lucy looked down on the newly met relics of the

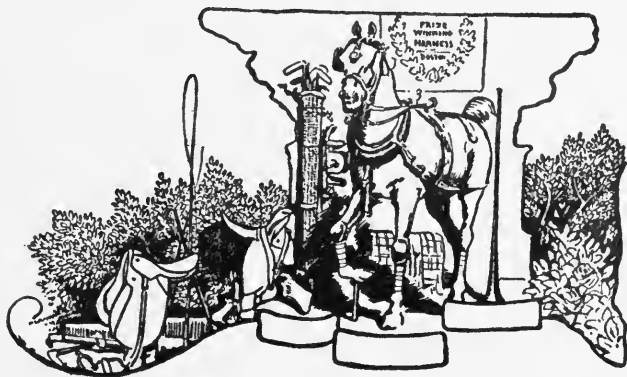


S C R O G G I N S

older day. Once more Scroggins sat in the same room with Lucy, once more the voice of her mother pierced his heart. The words she spoke in that last audience seemingly vibrated in the air: "Love comes without thought, James." "And to such as me, love hangs on, and on, and on," Scroggins mentally replied. Then in his mind he added: "I've got ter do some tall lyin' ef I git out of here without givin' myself away, but when it's fer the best, Scroggins kin lie a leetle!"

"If you please, ma'am, I'm lookin' fer Jerusha Moore's house."

"This is the place," she replied.



L U C Y M O O R E

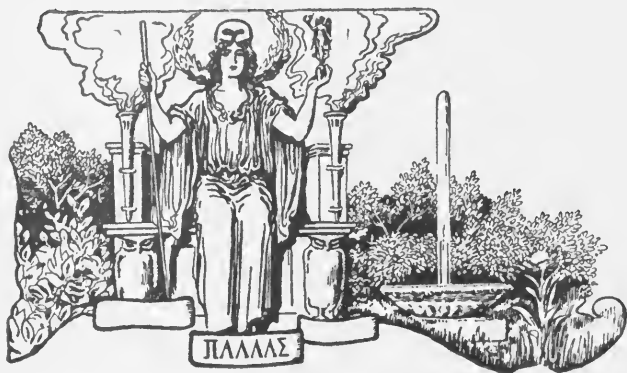
“Hev you lived hereabout fer long, ma’am?”

“I was born in this house.”

“Hev you any sisters or brothers?”

“No. I’m alone; alone with a man and his wife who live in the back rooms and care for the place.” Raising her eyes to the portraits she added: “Father and mother have been dead more than twenty years.”

“Did you lose yer husband early, ma’am?” The old man raised his eyes, and scanned the walls. The portrait of Jerusha Moore was the only man’s portrait. He need not have asked the question.



S C R O G G I N S

The woman flushed. "I have never been married, sir." Then she added, for it seemed as though the aimless questions had become too personal. "Can I do anything for you?" The "you" was slightly emphasised.

"Yes'm. I've come a long ways, ma'am, and when I started from the West I promised my old pardner I'd look up the Moores. That's what I've done stopped here fer, ma'am." Then, without giving her a chance to reply, he continued: "That pardner of mine said, said he, if I met Lucy Moore, ter ask her a question, and that's what I'm doin', ma'am. I hope, ma'am, you won't think hard



L U C Y M O O R E

of me. Kin I see Lucy Moore, ef she's livin'?"

"I am Lucy Moore."

"Thank ye, ma'am." The eyes of the speaker sought the portraits. He was afraid to look the woman in the face. "She'd never suspicion me if she war a man, but Lord! Scroggins, you've got ter think quick, and speak ter the pint ef you git out of this 'thout bein' found out," he added mentally. Then he continued: "That pardner of mine said, said he, 'Pardner, when you git East, hunt up the Moores on the South Road, beyond the hill. Then see if Lucy's livin'.' That's what I'm



S C R O G G I N S

here fer, ma'am, and now that I've found out she's livin', I'll be goin'." He picked up his hat and started to rise from his chair. Strange that he should have expected to be allowed to depart without further explanation after rousing a woman's curiosity as he had done.

"Please be seated. Tell me of this partner. Why did he ask about me?"

"'Thar's nothin' much ter tell 'bout him."

"What was his name?"

"Said he, 'When you find Lucy Moore, p'raps she'll remember me, p'raps she won't.'" Scroggins was evidently much disturbed.



L U C Y M O O R E

His evasive reply seemed but to increase her interest.

“Please tell me the name of this partner?”

“Don’t you remember no one who knew you, ’long ’bout the twenties, er before? No one who mought hev called you ‘Lucy?’” A flush came to the cheek of the woman, a flush that told Scroggins that now *she* was on the defensive.

“That was in my girlhood. I was then known as Lucy to everyone.”

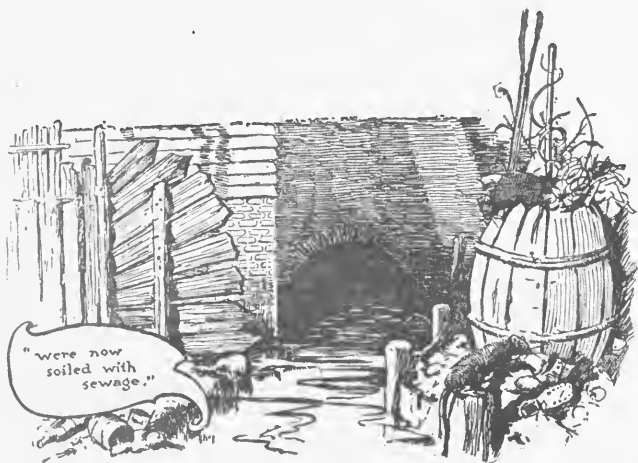
“Don’t you remember no one pertic’lar person who went off, and mought hev thought a



S C R O G G I N S

bit 'bout Lucy Moore twixt then and now? No one who Lucy mought hev thought 'bout, too? That's nigh 'bout what that pardner of mine told me ter say, ef occasion permitted."

The flush disappeared, a pallor replaced it. She who had lived these years as Lucy Moore because she had been faithful to one she believed faithless to herself, knew now who was that partner. But in the coarse, bearded man before her, could she have been expected to recognise the boy who, in his teens, had left her?



L U C Y M O O R E

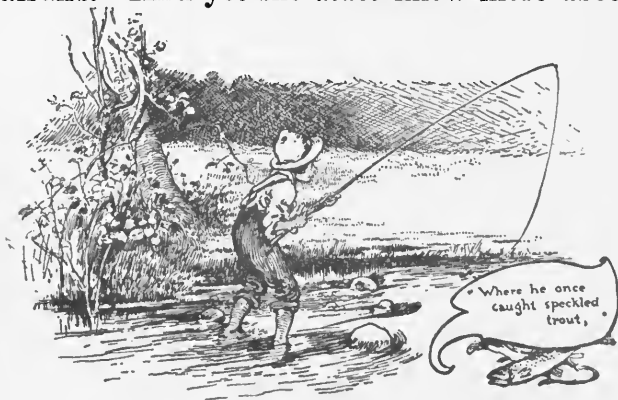
"I had a friend once, a boy friend, who left our home one cold night, never to return. I have often thought of him. He might, if living, have thought of me." She spoke very low, and waited the reply.

"Was he a bad boy, ma'am?"

"No."

"Then he's not pardner." The eyes of Scroggins sought the portrait of the mother. "Did your mother approve of that boy, ma'am?"

The question irritated the listener. This stranger was impertinently prying into her affairs. And yet she *must* know more about

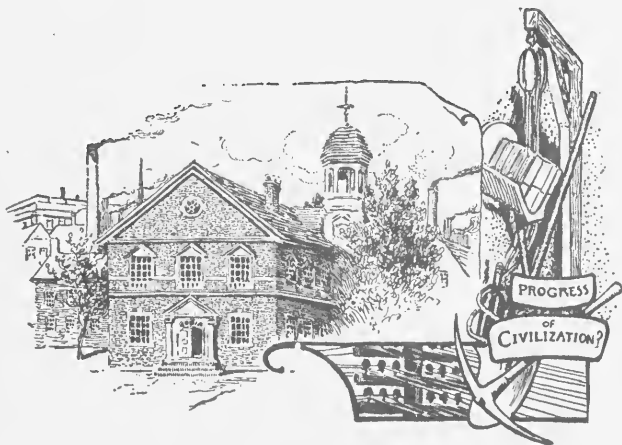


S C R O G G I N S

the man who had sent the message. "Mother was very fond of Jimmie. She was distressed when he ran away."

With mind still on the mother, the man eyed the portrait. "Damn the old woman!" he said to himself: "that's one p'int ag'in her." Gazing still at the portrait, he continued:

"That pardner of mine, ma'am, was kinder queer 'bout some things. One war that he told me jest 'nough 'bout this Lucy Moore to tell nuthin'. I guess, ma'am, I can't help you much, ma'am." Again he started to rise.



L U C Y M O O R E

“Be seated, please. What was the *name* of your friend?”

“Did you miss anything the night that boy ran off. P’raps he stole a pile.”

“Nothing but a keepsake he had given me a few days before. That disappeared the night James left home.”

“P’raps you’ll excuse the question, but I memberlect, now, that pardner told me he didn’t take *nothin’* that b’longed to no one.”

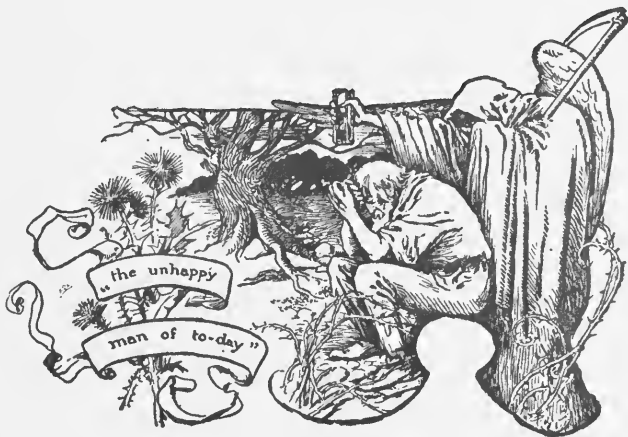
“If he is the boy I have in mind, he took a little music-box that belonged to *me*.” She spoke positively, earnestly.



S C R O G G I N S

“Didn’t you give the box to your mother, ma’am? ’Peers ter me that I’ve a recollection Jim said somethin’ ’bout that occasion.”

“Mother was surprised to know that it had disappeared.” Scroggins’ eyes were again fixed on the portrait. He seemed to see the lips move. He surely heard the sound of her words as she handed him the box that day. And then it came to him that in it all the mother had *not* said that Lucy had returned the box, or given it to her to be returned. “Damn the old cuss!” Scroggins mentally



LUCY MOORE

ejaculated. "I've been a fifty-year fool!" Then, to Lucy:

"Miss Moore, p'r'aps you'll pardon me fer takin' the part of pardner Jim. He's a tough old feller, but he didn't steal that music-box that night, ner he didn't take it out of your room. Jim's bad in some ways now, ma'am, but he want never mean 'nough ter hev took nothin' from Lucy Moore."

"How can I know you speak the truth? How do I know you have any right to speak at all? You are a stranger."

Scroggins peered intently at the speaker.



S C R O G G I N S

She made no sign of recognition. The love of half a century held in sacred memory a fresh-faced boy. The grizzled old man had no part therein.

Slowly Scroggins' hand sought his pocket, more slowly it was withdrawn, half concealing within it a small package. Between the fingers could be seen folds of faded tissue paper. "Jim said to me, said he, 'Pardner, p'r'aps you'll find Lucy in the old place yet, and p'r'aps she'll not recollect me outen some-thin' ter mind her of old times.' P'r'aps,



L U C Y M O O R E

ma'am, this 'ere bit of whatever it is 'll tell whether pardner Jim had ever known you, and p'r'aps it'll sartify ter my right ter speak fer old Jim Scroggins."

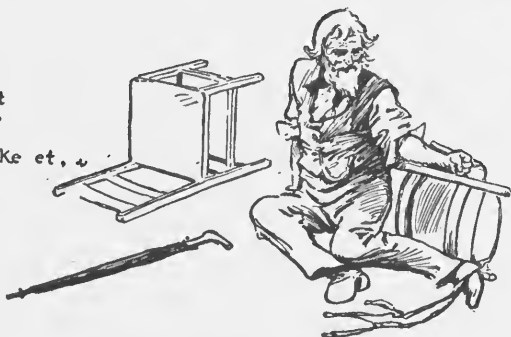
As the keepsake was placed in the hand of the listener, a tiny touch of melody arose, a tinkling that was familiar to both the occupants of the room, the continuance of a ballad that had been suspended fifty years before. Strange that this music-box, which had been thumped the country over, which had never been wound since it left the home of the girl, should have taken up the broken thread when it again



S C R O G G I N S

touched the hand of her for whom the boy had sacrificed, first so great a portion of his small wealth, and next his life's happiness. The woman said nothing. While she held the box, which had pleaded its own story, Scroggins continued: "Jim Scroggins said, said he, 'Pardner, if you find Lucy Moore, pervided she ain't married, give her this leetle keepsake and say ter her, "Lucy, Jim took it away, and took himself away too, because he loved Lucy Moore too much to run no risk of disgracin' her by lovin' her no stronger." Say ter her that it pow'ful nigh broke his heart ter go away ferever, but fer Lucy's sake it had ter be done, and he did it. It's a long time back,'

"Thar
ain't
nothin'
like et."



L U C Y M O O R E

said Pardner Jim, 'but ter me, Lucy is still little Lucy. Tell her so if you see her. Never the time has been that I hain't grown to love her stronger each day than I did the day before. Say to her that I've kept this little box in the face of more troubles than any dozen men in any Eastern town have ever thought of, and that now Scroggins sends it back askin' that Lucy Moore'll keep it in the old house till——'"

"Until what?"

"'Till——' That's all he said, ma'am." Scroggins turned to the door, and stopped.



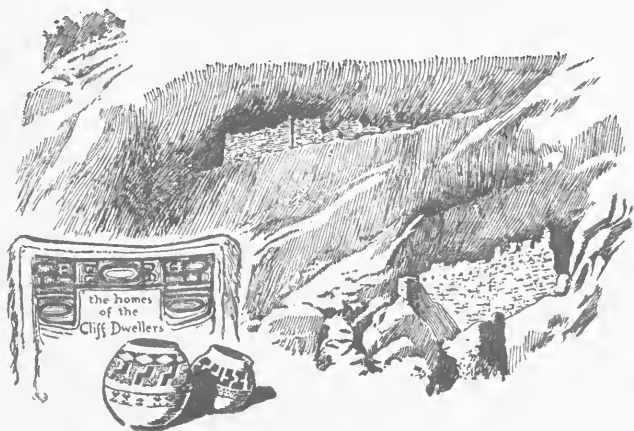
Old
SCROGGINS
sang
a
crude ditty

S C R O G G I N S

“Hev you any word to send ter pardner Jim, ma’am?”

“May he not possibly return to the home of his boyhood, and speak for himself?”

“He’s been too long in the moun’ns, ma’am. I ken say fer sure that he’ll never come nearer the old home than he is now. Besides, ma’am, it’s best fer him *not* ter come. You wouldn’t know the old man now, and it would be wicked fer him to let you see him. The pink of his cheek is all gone, ma’am, the skin of his hand is tough and rough, the beard on his face and



L U C Y M O O R E

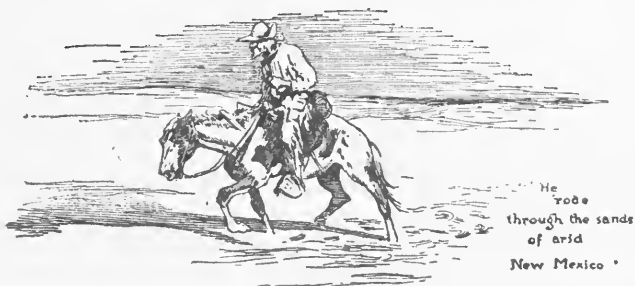
chin is coarse as pig's bristles, the hair on his neck grows down ter his chest, and his head is as bald as a punkin. B'sides, he drinks whiskey like as a fish drinks water, chaws ter-backer that'd kill a pig, and he kin lie a leetle, too. Jest you keep thinkin' of Jimmie as you knew him—you've no right to see old Jim Scroggins. But, ma'am, I'll say ter Jim when I sees him, 'Pardner, Lucy Moore's been jest as true ter you as you hev been ter her. Don't you make no mistake now. Don't you go back. Fight the battle out, Jim. Look fer Lucy over in heaven."



S C R O G G I N S

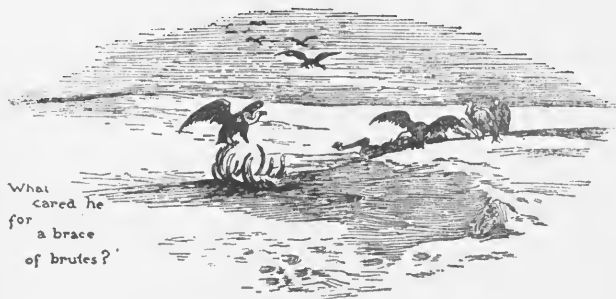
Lucy's handkerchief covered her face. A slight, convulsive sob broke the stillness. Then Scroggins continued: "The man's a fool, ma'am, who lives till he's grey, and then goes back ter his old home thinkin' ter find nothin' nat'ral, er ter love, 'ceptin' calves and cows and sheep and sech. That's all, ma'am." He stood on the outer step. "P'r'aps *you've* something ter say ter pardner?"

"Tell Jimmie that Lucy Moore lives in the old home, comfortable and peaceful, that the attic-room of Jimmie Scroggins stands jist as he left it, even to the pencil drawing of his sister that hangs on the wall. Say to him that the pain of Lucy's heart over the love she bore him, long since disappeared in the con-



L U C Y M O O R E

tentment of deep disappointment. Tell him that if ever necessity requires, or if he ever feels a longing that needs be heeded, the old home is still his home, and that he can come back and live in it as though it were his own. We will go on to life's end, he, Jimmie Scroggins, and I, Lucy Moore." She pressed the music-box to her heart, a tear rolled down her cheek. The old man turned his head, a mighty struggle shook him. That tear came near proving his undoing. "Fer Lucy's sake it mussent be!" he mentally ejaculated. "I'm a brute, and she's an angel." Conquering his emotion, which seemingly passed unobserved, he took from his pocket the envelope that held the deposit account.



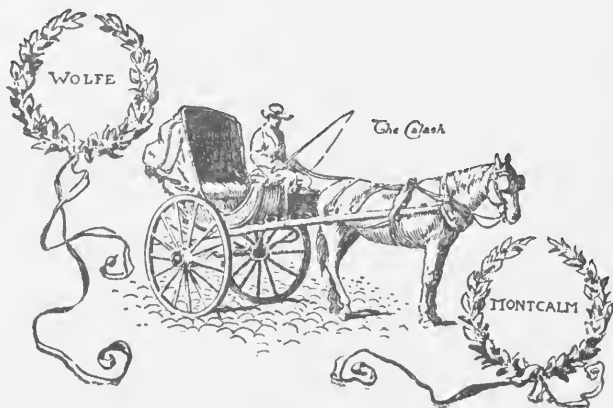
S C R O G G I N S

“Jim never’ll need nothin’, ma’am, he’s richer’n sin. Him and me hev been pardners fer a mighty long time. I knows Pardner Jim ’bout as well as he knows himself, ma’am. We’ve bunked tergether, and fought, and froze, and starved tergether too long fer him ter give me up fer no one, not even Lucy Moore. He’ll never come no nearer here than he is now, ma’am. Good-bye, Lucy Moore, good-bye fer pardner Jim!” Then, as though a forgotten duty had arisen, he took the bank-book from the envelope. “Here’s a present that Jim asked me ter hand you, ef I



L U C Y M O O R E

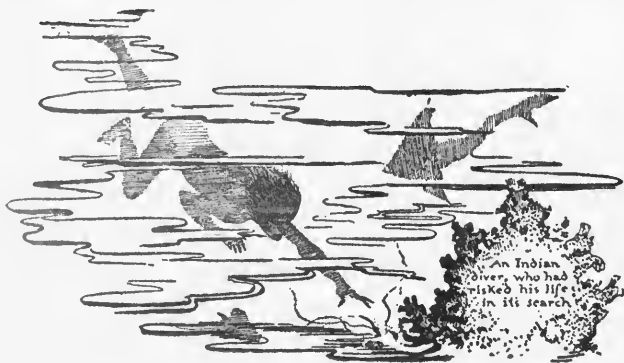
saw you. Use it fer the poor, fer the church, fer anything Lucy Moore cares fer. It'll be showin' pardner a kindness, fer he hain't no chance ter help no one, and like other rich men, he can't take his money away when he dies. That's a good thing, too, ma'am, or these old scavenger misers would tote the world down, down. The whole earth would hev been skinned, and everything movable'd hev been burnin' with 'em, long ago. Good-bye, ma'am!" He strode away, turned back. "Please, ma'am, Jim didn't steal that music box," then muttered to himself, "Damn the



S C R O G G I N S

devilish old busybody who told me that white lie which drove me off fifty years ago! But it's too late, now, Scroggins."

He reached the road, climbed the fence, and for the first time (and the last time, too), gazed back across the stretch of meadow. The grass was green to the door, between the patches of elm-tree shade the brook glistened in the sunshine, the flock of sheep lazily lolled in the shadow, the old cow stood with head over the bars licking the back of her baby calf, while in the door of the little home stood Lucy. Alert old Scroggins, his expert eye strengthened by the necessities of his frontier life,





“HE STRODE AWAY, TURNED BACK ‘PLEASE MA’AM, JIM DIDN’T
STEAL THAT MUSIC BOX.’”

L U C Y M O O R E

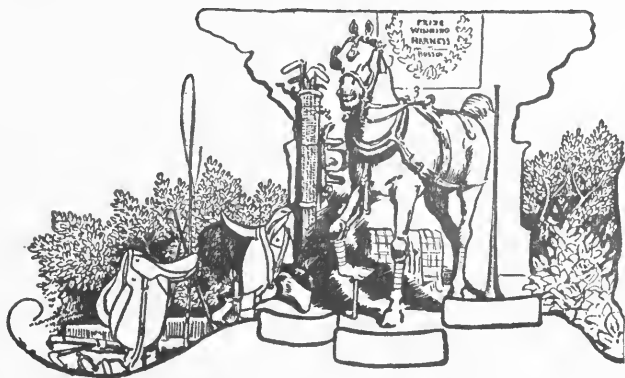
caught the white of her hair, and caught the hand pressed to her heart. No need to say that it held the old music-box. Then the wanderer again started down the South Road, as he retraced his steps toward the new city beyond the hill, on whose summit was to stand the mighty University that the white lie of the mother, the broken lives of two wrecked human hearts, the shame that threw two waifs into the poorhouse, had together conspired to found. An institution that could never have been but for these sins and disappointments.

It was dark when Scroggins reached the hotel. He sought his room, took a mighty



S C R O G G I N S

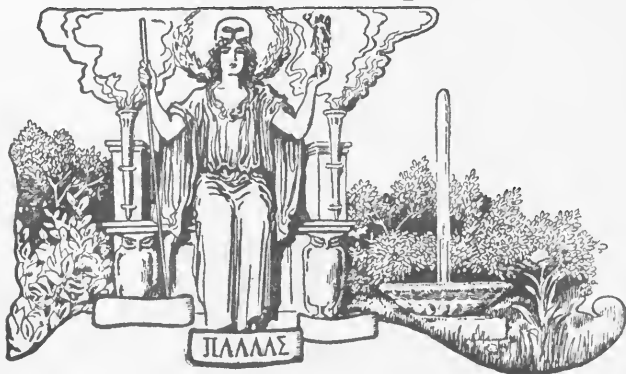
swig out of the bottle, his close companion now, threw himself into a chair and muttered: "I wonder if I *did* fool her, after all. Damme if I don't bel'eve Lucy Moore knew me all the time, and jest drew me on! It'd be jest like a woman ter do it!"



CHAPTER IX

A SECOND REQUEST—"WHEN THE OLD MAN'S
WORK IS DONE"

DURING the following week Scroggins established to the satisfaction of those in whom the trust was placed that he could fulfil his promise concerning the donation of a million dollars. And not only did he make a bequest of this amount as an endowment, but provided funds of sufficient value to purchase the hill-



S C R O G G I N S

site and fifty acres of picturesque ground, and to build the University. He also established a fund to educate the unfortunates from the county poorhouse, so that all of sufficient ability to rise to the University might be enabled to enter its doors. The details were arranged, the methods of appointing the trustees devised, and that of filling vacancies established according to the advice of the Judges of the Court, who were called to the conference, and were to appoint two of the trustees. Then, in reply to a final question, he said:

“I wants it ter be remembered that I ain’t



A SECOND REQUEST

a-doin' this fer glory. Thar ain't no glory ter me in nothin' but drivin' the gulch stage-coach. I don't want no name of Scroggins, neither, stuck onter this hill University. I ain't a-givin' this money fer sech an object as that. Scroggins ain't pinched no widders ner orphans, an' he hain't broke up no man's business fer ter git rich. He ain't ashamed of nothin' he hes done, and thar ain't no reason ter give this money in order ter stop people talkin' 'bout his meanness, er ter buy his way inter heaven. I'm goin' back ter stage-coachin', and I'm mighty glad ter git shet of this money. Thar's only one reason fer me



S C R O G G I N S

ter give it ter this Eenstitution, and that air so that young people may larn how ter think, and so that poorhouse-childern kin hev a fair show. Et air a blessin' ter be able ter git pleasure out of nothin', like them book-larned, thinkin' people kin do. I hev seed fellers without a dollar in thar pockets stand in the gulch and talk 'bout grand scenes, and mightily enj'y thinkin' 'bout what wa'n't nothin' ter me but a deep holler and a high stone cliff. I hev seed young ladies set on top of the stage and git more good out of one hour of life in goin' through the gulch, than Scroggins got in



A SECOND REQUEST

travellin' over every foot of that blasted country. That's because them folks kin think, and Scroggins can't. When a feller hes an empty pocket and a head full of thoughts, he kin be happy. When a feller hes a million dollars in bank, and no thoughts outside of a stage-coach team, he ain't happy lessen he air holdin' of the lines. It air a farce ter tie the name of sech a feller es me ter an Eenstitution fer teachin' thinkin'. Give it any other name you please. I says ag'in, Scroggins ain't askin' no return, and he ain't buyin' no man's good

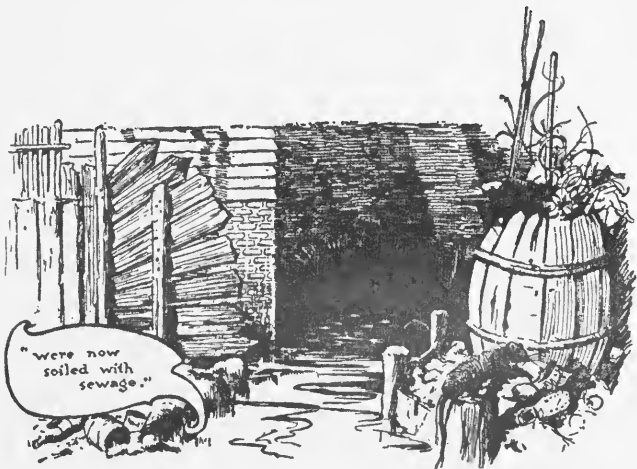


"The boy
threw
himself
beside
the
bed"

S C R O G G I N S

will. He ain't stole no money, and he ain't tryin' ter put no fam'ly inter good standin'. Et's pow'ful hard," he continued, "ter put some fam'lies inter good standin'. Millions of dollars can't buy no pedigree, and——" He hesitated, stammered, and stopped abruptly. The poorhouse of old arose, the phantom face of his sister of other days came before him again.

"Proceed, Mr. Scroggins," said the mayor.
Old Scroggins rubbed his hands together as

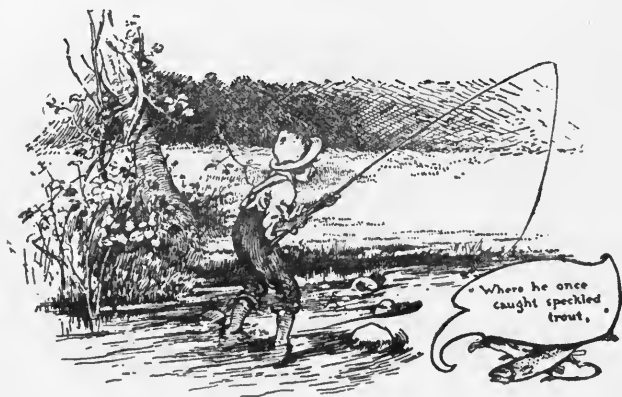


A SECOND REQUEST

if they were cold; he muttered to himself as if arguing a point. "Mebbe I am wrong," he said at last. "Mebbe I am a leetle wrong, but not 'bout the fam'ly matter, neither. Thar *is* one thing I'd like one of the Scrogginses ter hev, ef it kin be done, but I kinder hate ter ask fer it."

"You have but to make the request known, Mr. Scroggins," said the mayor.

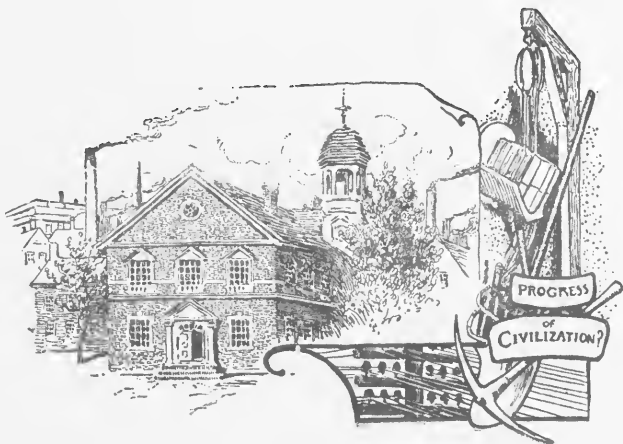
"Over thar in the graveyard, the *old* graveyard, thar air a leetle grave in the poorhouse row." Scroggins took out his pocket-book, carefully unfolded a paper, and slowly read:



S C R O G G I N S

“JENNIE SCROGGINS,
Poorhouse Child,
ONLY SISTER OF JAMES SCROGGINS.
Died, June 10, 1809.
Aged ten years.

“Thet air on the stone. Et war put thar nigh onter fifty year ago by a boy who spent fer it the only piece of gold he hed ever handled. Ef it air possible, ef thar hain’t no objections, ner no disgrace ter the Eenstitution fer a poorhouse-child, who didn’t hev no father ner mother, ter lie in the grounds,



A SECOND REQUEST

Scroggins would like ter hev what's left of that leetle darlin' ter be moved inter a shady spot, off in some corner of the grounds, and ter hev the same old stone sot over the head."

A silence such as this sacred request alone could bring came over his hearers. For once, the lawyer lost his tongue. Scroggins misinterpreted the failure to respond. His voice quivered as he pleaded:

"She war a mighty leetle thing!"

Again he hesitated, as if embarrassed, then continued:



S C R O G G I N S

"And ef it air not askin' too much, when the lines of the gulch-stage air dropped out of Scroggins' hands; he would like might'ly ter lie beside that girl, what hev slept nigh onter fifty years."

"There certainly can be no objection," said the Judge of the Superior Court.

"Thank ye," the old man answered. "Scroggins don't ask nothin' more, ef, when the old man's work is done, a little cheap stone, jest like the one over Sister, be sot alongside hers. Here is the writin' fer ter go onter it."



A SECOND REQUEST

From the same pocket-book he took another piece of paper, on which was awkwardly scrawled:

JIM SCROGGINS,
Poorhouse Child.
Only Bruther of
JENNIE SCROGGINS.
Died drivin' the Gulch Stage.



**University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
305 De Neve Drive - Parking Lot 17 • Box 951388
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1388**

Return this material to the library from which it was borrowed.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 816 457 6

Un